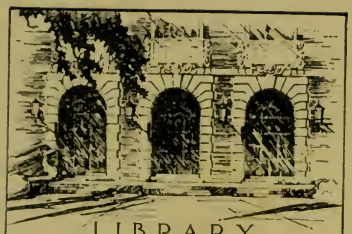

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MISS CAREW.

VOL. III.

MISS CAREW.

BY

AMELIA B. EDWARDS,

AUTHOR OF

"BARBARA'S HISTORY,"

&c., &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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CHAPTER I.

MY BROTHER'S GHOST STORY.

THE events which I am about to relate happened to my only brother. I have heard him tell the story many and many a time, never varying in the minutest particular. It happened about thirty years ago, more or less, while he was wandering, sketch-book in hand, among the High Alps, picking up subjects for an illustrated work on Switzerland. Having entered the Oberland by the Brunig Pass, and filled his portfolio with what he used to call "bits" from the neighbourhood of Meyringen, he went over the great Scheideck to Grindlewald, where he arrived one dusky September evening, about three quarters of an hour after sun-

set. There had been a fair that day, and the place was crowded. In the best inn there was not an inch of space to spare—there were only two inns at Grindlewald thirty years ago—so my brother went to the one other, at the end of the covered bridge next the church, and there, with some difficulty, obtained the promise of a pile of rugs and a mattress, in a room which was already occupied by three other travellers.

The "Adler" was a primitive hostelry, half farm, half inn, with great rambling galleries outside, and a huge general room, like a barn. At the upper end of this room stood long stoves, like metal counters, laden with steaming-pans, and glowing underneath like furnaces. At the lower end, smoking, supping, and chatting, were congregated some thirty or forty guests, chiefly mountaineers, char-drivers, and guides. Among these my brother took his seat; and was served, like the rest, with a bowl of soup, a platter of beef, a flagon

of country wine, and a loaf made of Indian corn. Presently, a huge St. Bernard dog came and laid his nose upon my brother's arm. In the meantime he fell into conversation with two Italian youths, bronzed and dark-eyed, near whom he happened to be seated. They were Florentines. Their names, they told him, were Stefano and Battisto. They had been travelling for some months on commission, selling cameos, mosaics, sulphur casts, and the like pretty Italian trifles, and were now on their way to Interlaken and Geneva. Weary of the cold North, they longed, like children, for the moment which should take them back to their own blue hills and grey-green olives; to their workshop on the Ponte Vecchio, and their home down by the Arno.

It was quite a relief to my brother, on going up to bed, to find that these youths were to be two of his fellow-lodgers. The third was already there, and sound asleep, with his face to the wall. They scarcely looked at

this third. They were all tired, and all anxious to rise at daybreak, having agreed to walk together over the Wengern Alp as far as Lauterbrunnen. So, my brother and the two youths exchanged a brief good night, and, before many minutes, were all as far away in the land of dreams as their unknown companion.

My brother slept profoundly—so profoundly that, being roused in the morning by a clamour of merry voices, he sat up dreamily in his rugs, and wondered where he was.

"Good day, signor," cried Battisto. "Here is a fellow-traveller going the same way as ourselves."

"Christien Baumann, native of Kandersteg, musical-box maker by trade, stands five feet eleven in his shoes, and is at monsieur's service to command," said the sleeper of the night before.

He was as fine a young fellow as one would wish to see. Light, and strong, and well proportioned, with curling brown hair, and bright,

honest eyes that seemed to dance at every word he uttered.

"Good morning," said my brother. "You were asleep last night when we came up."

"Asleep! I should think so, after being all day in the fair, and walking from Meyringen the evening before. What a capital fair it was!"

"Capital, indeed," said Battisto. "We sold cameos and mosaics yesterday for nearly fifty francs."

"Oh, you sell cameos and mosaics, you two! Show me your cameos, and I will show you my musical-boxes. I have such pretty ones, with coloured views of Geneva and Chillon on the lids, playing two, four, six, and even eight tunes. Bah! I will give you a concert!"

And with this he unstrapped his pack, displayed his little boxes on the table, and wound them up, one after the other, to the delight of the Italians.

"I helped to make them myself, every one," said he, proudly. "Is it not pretty music? I sometimes set one of them when I go to bed at night, and fall asleep listening to it. I am sure, then, to have pleasant dreams! But let us see your cameos. Perhaps I may buy one for Marie if they are not too dear. Marie is my sweetheart, and we are to be married next week."

"Next week!" exclaimed Stefano. "That is very soon. Battisto has a sweetheart also, up at Impruneta; but they will have to wait a long time before they can buy the ring."

Battisto blushed like a girl.

"Hush, brother!" said he. "Show the cameos to Christien, and give your tongue a holiday."

But Christien was not so to be put off.

"What is her name?" said he. "Tush! Battisto, you must tell me her name! Is she pretty? Is she dark or fair? Do you often see her when you are at home? Is she very

fond of you? Is she as fond of you as Marie is of me?"

"Nay, how should I know that?" asked the soberer Battisto. "She loves me, and I love her—that is all."

"And her name?"

"Margherita."

"A charming name! And she is herself as pretty as her name, I'll engage. Did you say she was fair?"

"I said nothing about it one way or the other," said Battisto, unlocking a green box clamped with iron, and taking out tray after tray of his pretty wares. "There! Those pictures all inlaid in little bits are Roman mosaics—these flowers on a black ground are Florentine. The ground is of hard dark stone, and the flowers are made of thin slices of jasper, onyx, cornelian, and so forth. Those forget-me-notes, for instance, are bits of turquoise, and that poppy is cut from a piece of coral."

"I like the Roman ones best," said Christien. "What place is that with all the arches?"

"This is the Coliseum, and the one next to it is St. Peter's. But we Florentines care little for the Roman work. It is not half so fine, or so valuable as ours. The Romans make their mosaics of composition."

"Composition or no, I like the little landscapes best," said Christien. "There is a lovely one, with a pointed building, and a tree, and mountains at the back. How I should like that one for Marie!"

"You may have it for eight francs," replied Battisto; "we sold two of them yesterday for ten each. It represents the tomb of Caius Cestius, near Rome."

"A tomb!" echoed Christien, considerably dismayed. "*Diable!* That would be a dismal present to one's bride."

"She would never guess that it was a tomb, if you did not tell her," suggested Stefano.

Christien shook his head.

"That would be next door to deceiving her," said he.

"Nay," interposed my brother, "the owner of that tomb has been dead these eighteen or nineteen hundred years. One almost forgets that he was ever buried in it."

"Eighteen or nineteen hundred years! Then he was a heathen?"

"Undoubtedly, if by that you mean that he lived before Christ."

Christien's face lighted up immediately.

"Oh! that settles the question," said he, pulling out his little canvas purse, and paying his money down at once. "A heathen's tomb is as good as no tomb at all. I'll have it made into a brooch for her, at Interlaken. Tell me, Battisto, what shall you take home to Italy for your Margherita?"

Battisto laughed, and chinked his eight francs.

"That depends on trade," said he; "if we

make good profits between this and Christmas, I may take her a Swiss muslin from Berne; but we have already been away seven months, and we have hardly made a hundred francs over and above our expenses."

And with this, the talk turned upon general matters, the Florentines locked away their treasures, Christien restrapped his pack, and my brother and all went down together, and breakfasted in the open air outside the inn.

It was a magnificent morning, cloudless and sunny, with a cool breeze that rustled in the vine upon the porch, and flecked the table with shifting shadows of green leaves. All around and about them stood the great mountains, with their blue-white glaciers bristling down to the verge of the pastures, and the pine-woods creeping darkly up their sides. To the left, the Wetterhorn; to the right, the Eigher; straight before them, dazzling and imperishable, like peaks of frosted silver, the

Vischer-hörner clustered on the verge of an icy precipice. Breakfast over, they bade farewell to their hostess, and, mountain-staff in hand, took the path to the Wengern Alp. Half in light, half in shadow, lay the quiet valley, dotted over with farms, and traversed by a torrent that rushed, milk-white, from its prison in the glacier. The three lads walked briskly in advance, their voices chiming together every now and then in chorus of laughter. Somehow, my brother felt sad. He lingered behind, and, plucking a little red flower from the bank, watched it hurry away with the torrent, like a life on the stream of time. Why was his heart so heavy, and why were their hearts so light?

As the day went on, my brother's melancholy, and the mirth of the young men, seemed to increase. Full of youth and hope, they talked of the joyous future, and built up pleasant castles in the air. Battisto, grown more communicative, admitted that to marry Mar-

gherita, and become a master mosaicist, would fulfil the dearest wish of his life. Stefano, not being in love, preferred to travel. Christien, who seemed to be the most prosperous, declared that it was his darling ambition to rent a farm in his native Kander Valley, and lead the patriarchal life of his fathers. As for the musical-box trade, he said, one must live in Geneva to make it answer; but, for his part, he loved the pine-forests and the snow-peaks better than all the towns in Europe. Marie, too, had been born among the mountains, and it would break her heart if she thought she were to live in Geneva all her life, and never see the Kander Thal again. Chatting thus, the morning wore on to noon, and the party rested awhile in the shade of a clump of gigantic firs festooned with trailing banners of grey-green moss.

Here they ate their luncheon, to the silvery music of one of Christien's little boxes, and

by-and-by heard the sullen echo of an avalanche far away on the shoulder of the Jungfrau.

Then they went on again in the burning afternoon, to heights where the Alp-rose fails from the sterile steep, and the brown lichen grows more and more scantily among the stone. Here, only the bleached and barren skeletons of a forest of dead pines varied the desolate monotony; and high on the summit of the pass stood a little solitary inn, between them and the sky.

At this inn they rested again, and drank to the health of Christien and his bride, in a jug of country wine. He was in uncontrollable spirits, and shook hands with all of them over and over again.

"By nightfall to-morrow," said he, "I shall hold her once more in my arms! It is now nearly two years since I came home to see her, at the end of my apprenticeship. Now I am foreman, with a salary of thirty

francs a week, and well able to marry."

"Thirty francs a week!" echoed Battisto. "*Corpo di Bacco!* that is a little fortune."

Christien's face beamed.

"Yes," said he, "we shall be very happy; and, by and-by—who knows?—we may end our days in the Kander Thal, and bring up our children to succeed us. Ah! if Marie knew that I should be there to-morrow night, how delighted she would be!"

"How so?" said my brother. "Does she not expect you?"

"Not a bit of it. She has no idea that I can be there till the day after to-morrow—nor could I, if I took the road all round by Unterseen and Frütigen. I mean to sleep to-night at Lauterbrunnen, and to-morrow morning shall strike across the Tschlingel glacier to Kandersteg. If I rise a little before day-break, I shall be at home by sunset."

At this moment the path took a sudden turn, and began to descend in sight of an im-

mense perspective of very distant valleys. Christien flung his cap into the air, and uttered a great shout.

"Look!" said he, stretching out his arms; as if to embrace the dear familiar scene; "oh, look! There are the hills and woods of Interlaken, and here, below the precipices on which we stand, lies Lauterbrunnen! God be praised, who has made our native land so beautiful!"

The Italians smiled at each other, thinking their own Arno valley far more fair; but my brother's heart warmed to the boy, and echoed his thanksgiving in that spirit which accepts all beauty as a birthright and an inheritance. And now their course lay across an immense plateau, all rich with cornfields and meadows, and studded with substantial homesteads built of old brown wood, with huge sheltering eaves, and strings of Indian corn hanging like golden ingots along the carven balconies. Blue whortleberries grew

beside the footway, and now and then they came upon a wild gentian or a star-shaped immortelle. Then the path became a mere zigzag on the face of the precipice, and in less than half an hour they reached the lowest level of the valley. The glowing afternoon had not yet faded from the uppermost pines, when they were all dining together in the parlour of a little inn looking to the Jungfrau. In the evening my brother wrote letters, while the three lads strolled about the village. At nine o'clock they bade each other good night, and went to their several rooms.

Weary as he was, my brother found it impossible to sleep. The same unaccountable melancholy still possessed him, and when at last he dropped into an uneasy slumber, it was but to start over and over and over again from frightful dreams, faint with a nameless terror. Towards morning he fell into a profound sleep, and never woke until the day was fast advancing towards noon. He then found,

to his regret, that Christien had long since gone. He had risen before daybreak, breakfasted by candlelight, and started off in the grey dawn—"as merry," said the host, "as a fiddler at a fair."

Stefano and Battisto were still waiting to see my brother; being charged by Christien with a friendly farewell message to him, and an invitation to the wedding. They, too, were asked, and meant to go; so my brother agreed to meet them at Interlaken on the following Tuesday, whence they might walk to Kandersteg by easy stages, reaching their destination on the Thursday morning, in time to go to church with the bridal party. My brother then bought some of the little Florentine cameos, wished the two boys every good fortune, and watched them down the road till he could see them no longer.

Left now to himself, he wandered out with his sketch-book, and spent the day in the upper valley. At sunset, he dined alone in his

chamber, by the light of a single lamp. This meal despatched, he drew nearer to the fire, took out a pocket edition of Goethe's Essays on Art, and promised himself some hours of pleasant reading.

Ah, how well I know that very book, in its faded cover, and how often I have heard him describe that lonely evening!

The night had by this time set in cold and wet. The damp logs spluttered on the hearth, and a wailing wind swept down the valley, bearing the rain in sudden gusts against the panes. My brother soon found that to read was impossible. His attention wandered incessantly. He read the same sentence over and over again, unconscious of its meaning, and fell into long trains of thought leading far into the dim past.

Thus the hours went by, and at eleven o'clock he heard the doors closing below, and the household retiring to rest. He determined to yield no longer to this dreaming apathy.

He threw on fresh logs, trimmed the lamp, and took several turns about the room. Then he opened the casement, and suffered the rain to beat against his face, and the wind to ruffle his hair, as it ruffled the acacia leaves in the garden below. Some minutes passed thus, and when, at length, he closed the window and came back into the room, his face and hair and all the front of his shirt were thoroughly saturated. To unstrap his knapsack and take out a dry shirt was, of course, his first impulse—to drop the garment, listen eagerly, and start to his feet, breathless and bewildered, was the next.

For, borne fitfully upon the outer breeze—now sweeping past the window, now dying in the distance—he heard a well-remembered strain of melody, subtle and silvery as the "sweet airs" of Prospero's isle, and proceeding unmistakeably from the musical-box which had, the day before, accompanied the luncheon under the fir-trees of the Wengern Alp!

Had Christien come back, and was it thus that he announced his return? If so, where was he? Under the window? Outside in the corridor? Sheltering in the porch, and waiting for admittance? My brother threw open the casement again, and called him by his name.

"Christien! Is that you?"

All without was intensely silent. He could hear the last gust of wind and rain moaning farther and farther away upon its wild course down the valley, and the pine trees shivering, like living things.

"Christien!" he said again, and his own voice seemed to echo strangely on his ear. "Speak! Is it you?"

Still no one answered. He leaned out into the dark night; but could see nothing—not even the outline of the porch below. He began to think that his imagination had deceived him, when suddenly the strain burst forth again; —this time, apparently in his own chamber.

As he turned, expecting to find Christien at his elbow, the sounds broke off abruptly, and a sensation of intensest cold seized him in every limb—not the mere chill of nervous terror; not the mere physical result of exposure to wind and rain; but a deadly freezing of every vein, a paralysis of every nerve, an appalling consciousness that in a few moments more the lungs must cease to play, and the heart to beat! Powerless to speak or stir, he closed his eyes, and believed that he was dying.

This strange faintness lasted but a few seconds. Gradually the vital warmth returned, and, with it, strength to close the window, and stagger to a chair. As he did so, he found the breast of his shirt all stiff and frozen, and the rain clinging in solid icicles upon his hair.

He looked at his watch. It had stopped at twenty minutes before twelve. He took his thermometer from the chimney-piece, and found the mercury at seventy. Heavenly

powers! How were these things possible in a temperature of seventy degrees, and with a large fire blazing on the hearth?

He poured out half a tumbler of cognac, and drank it at a draught. Going to bed was out of the question. He felt that he dared not sleep—that he scarcely dared to think. All he could do was to change his linen, pile on more logs, wrap himself in his blankets, and sit all night in an easy-chair before the fire.

My brother had not long sat thus, however, before the warmth, and probably the nervous reaction, drew him off to sleep. In the morning he found himself lying on the bed, without being able to remember in the least how or when he reached it.

It was again a glorious day. The rain and wind were gone, and the Silberhorn at the end of the valley lifted its head into an unclouded sky. Looking out upon the sunshine, he almost doubted the events of the night, and, but for

the evidence of his watch, which still pointed to twenty minutes before twelve, would have been disposed to treat the whole matter as a dream. As it was, he attributed more than half his terrors to the prompting of an over-active and over-wearied brain. For all this, he still felt depressed and uneasy, and so very unwilling to pass another night at Lauterbrunnen that he made up his mind to proceed that morning to Interlaken. While he was yet loitering over his breakfast, and considering whether he should walk the seven miles of road, or hire a vehicle, a char came rapidly to the inn door, and a young man jumped out.

"Why, Battisto!" exclaimed my brother in astonishment, as he came into the room, "what brings *you* here to-day? Where is Stefano?"

"I have left him at Interlaken, signor," replied the Italian.

Something there was in his voice, something

in his face, both strange and startling.

"What is the matter?" asked my brother, breathlessly. "He is not ill? No accident has happened?"

Battisto shook his head, glanced furtively up and down the passage, and closed the door.

"Stefano is well, signor; but—but a circumstance has occurred—a circumstance so strange! . . . . Signor, do you believe in spirits?"

"In spirits, Battisto?"

"Ay, signor; for if ever the spirit of any man, dead or living, appealed to human ears, the spirit of Christien came to me last night at twenty minutes before twelve o'clock."

"At twenty minutes before twelve o'clock!" repeated my brother.

"I was in bed, signor, and Stefano was sleeping in the same room. I had gone up quite warm, and had fallen asleep, full of pleasant

thoughts. By-and-by, although I had plenty of bed-clothes, and a rug over me as well, I woke, frozen with cold and scarcely able to breathe. I tried to call to Stefano; but I had no power to utter the slightest sound. I thought my last moment was come. All at once, I heard a sound under the window—a sound which I knew to be Christien's musical box; and it played as it played when we lunched under the fir-trees, except that it was more wild, and strange, and melancholy, —solemn to hear—awful to hear! Then, signor, it grew fainter and fainter—and then it seemed to float past upon the wind, and die away. When it had ceased, my frozen blood grew warm again, and I cried out to Stefano. When I told him what had happened, he declared I had been only dreaming. I made him strike a light, that I might look at my watch. It pointed to twenty minutes before twelve, and had stopped there; and, stranger still, Stefano's watch had done the very

same. Now tell me, signor, do you believe that there is any meaning in this, or do you think, as Stefano persists in thinking, that it was all a dream?"

"What is your own conclusion, Battisto?"

"My conclusion, signor, is that some harm has happened to poor Christien on the glacier, and that his spirit came to me last night."

"Battisto, he shall have help if living, or rescue for his poor corpse if dead; for I, too, believe that all is not well."

And with this, my brother told him briefly what had occurred to himself in the night; despatched messengers for the three best guides in Lauterbrunnen; and prepared ropes, ice-hatchets, Alpenstocks, and all such matters necessary for a glacier expedition. Hasten as he would, however, it was nearly mid-day before the party started.

Arriving in about half an hour at a place called Stechelberg, they left the char, in which they had travelled so far, at a châlet, and

ascended a steep path in full view of the Breithorn glacier, which rose up to the left like a battlemented wall of solid ice. The way now lay for some time among pastures and pine-forests. Then they came to a little colony of châlets, called Steinberg, where they filled their water-bottles, got their ropes in readiness, and prepared for the Tschlingel glacier. A few minutes more, and they were on the ice.

At this point the guides called a halt, and consulted together. One was for striking across the lower glacier towards the left, and reaching the upper glacier by the rocks which bound it on the south. The other two preferred the north, or right side; and this my brother finally took. The sun was now pouring down with almost tropical intensity, and the surface of the ice, which was broken into long treacherous fissures, smooth as glass and blue as the summer sky, was both difficult and dangerous. Silently and cautiously they

went, tied together at intervals of about three yards each, with two guides in front, and the third bringing up the rear. Turning presently to the right, they found themselves at the foot of a steep rock, some forty feet in height, up which they must climb to reach the upper glacier. The only way in which Battisto or my brother could hope to do this, was by the help of a rope steadied from below and above. Two of the guides accordingly clambered up the face of the crag by notches in the surface, and one remained below. The rope was then let down, and my brother prepared to go first. As he planted his foot in the first notch, a smothered cry from Battisto arrested him.

"*Santa Maria!* Signor, look yonder!"

My brother looked, and there (he ever afterwards declared), as surely as there is a heaven above us all, he saw Christien Baumann standing in the full sunlight, not a hundred yards distant! Almost in the same moment that my brother recognized him, he

was gone. He neither faded, nor sank down, nor moved away; but was simply gone, as if he had never been. Pale as death, Battisto fell upon his knees, and covered his face with his hands. My brother, awe-stricken and speechless, leaned against the rock, and felt that the object of his journey was but too fatally accomplished. As for the guides, they could not conceive what had happened.

"Did you see nothing?" asked my brother and Battisto, both together.

But the men had seen nothing, and the one who had remained below, said:—

"What should I see, but the ice and the sunlight?"

To this my brother made no other reply than by announcing his intention to have a certain crevasse, from which he had not once removed his eyes since he saw the figure standing on the brink, thoroughly explored before he went a step farther; whereupon the two men came down from the top of

the crag, resumed the ropes, and followed him, incredulously. At the narrow end of the fissure, he paused, and drove his Alpenstock firmly into the ice. It was an unusually long crevasse—at first a mere crack, but widening gradually as it went, and reaching down to unknown depths of dark deep blue, fringed with long pendent icicles, like diamond stalactites. Before they had followed the course of this crevasse for more than ten minutes, the youngest of the guides uttered a hasty exclamation.

"I see something!" cried he. "Something dark, wedged in the teeth of the crevasse, a great way down!"

They all saw it:—a mere indistinguishable mass, almost closed over by the ice-walls at their feet. My brother offered a hundred francs to the man who would go down and bring it up. They all hesitated.

"We don't know what it is," said one.

"Perhaps it is only a dead chamois," suggested another.

Their apathy enraged him.

"It is no chamois," he said, angrily. "It is the body of Christien Baumann, native of Kandersteg. And, by Heaven, if you are all too cowardly to make the attempt, I will go down myself!"

The youngest guide threw off his hat and coat, tied a rope about his waist, and took a hatchet in his hand.

"I will go, monsieur," said he; and without another word, suffered himself to be lowered in.

My brother turned away. A sickening anxiety came upon him, and presently he heard the dull echo of the hatchet far down in the ice. Then there was a call for another rope, and then—the men all drew aside in silence, and my brother saw the youngest guide standing once more beside the chasm, flushed and trembling, with the body of Christien lying at his feet.

Poor Christien! They made a rough bier with their ropes and Alpenstocks, and carried

him, with great difficulty, back to Steinberg. There, they got additional help as far as Stechelberg, where they laid him in the char, and so brought him on to Lauterbrunnen. The next day, my brother made it his sad business to precede the body to Kandersteg, and prepare his friends for its arrival. To this day, though all these things happened thirty years ago, he cannot bear to recall Marie's despair, or all the mourning that he innocently brought upon that peaceful valley. Poor Marie has been dead this many a year; and when my brother last passed through the Kander Thal on his way to the Ghemmi, he saw her grave, beside the grave of Christien Baumann, in the village burial-ground.

This is my brother's Ghost Story.

CHAPTER II.

THE RECOLLECTIONS OF PROFESSOR HENNEBERG.

> There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
> Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.—*Hamlet.*

"THERE are remembrances for which no philosophy will account—sensations for which experience can discover no parallel. Few persons will hesitate to confess to you that they have beheld scenes and faces which were new and yet familiar; of which they seemed to have dreamed in time gone by; and which, without any apparent cause, produced a painfully intimate impression upon their minds. I myself

have dreamed of a place, and again forgotten that dream. Years have passed away, and the dream has returned to me, unaltered in the minutest particular. I have at last come suddenly upon the scene in some wild land which I had never visited before, and have recognised it, tree for tree, field for field, as I had beheld it in my dream. Then the dream and the scene became one in my mind, and by that union I learned to wrest from Nature a portion of one of her obscurest secrets. What are these phenomena? Whence these fragmentary recollections which seem to establish a mysterious link between death and sleep? What is death? What is sleep? It is a law of the philosophy of mind that we can think of nothing which we have not perceived. The induction is, that we have perceived these things; but not, perhaps, in our present state of being."

"You believe, then, in the doctrine of preexistence!" I exclaimed, pushing back my

chair, and looking my guest earnestly in the face.

"I believe in the immortality of the soul," replied the Professor with unmoved solemnity. "I feel that I am, and that I have been. Eternity is a circle—you reduce it to a crescent, if you deny the previous half of its immensity. For the soul there is, properly speaking, neither past nor future. It is *now* and eternal. You profess to believe in the immortality of the soul, and in the same breath advance an opinion which, if submitted to a due investigation, would establish a totally adverse system. If this soul of yours be immortal, it must have existed from all time. If not, what guarantee have you that it will continue to be during all time to come? That which shall have no end can have no beginning. It is a part of God, and partakes of his nature. To be born is the same as to die. Both are transitionary; not creative or final.

Life is but a vesture of the Soul, and as often as we die, we but change one vesture for another."

"But this is the theory of the metempsychosis!" I said, smiling. "You have studied the philosophy of Oriental literature till you have yourself become a believer in the religion of Bramah!"

"All tradition," said the Professor, "is a type of spiritual truth. The superstitions of the East, and the mythologies of the North—the beautiful Fables of old Greece, and the bold investigations of modern science—all tend to elucidate the same principles; all take their root in those promptings and questionings which are innate in the brain and heart of man. Plato believed that the soul was immortal, and born frequently; that it knew all things; and that what we call learning is but the effort which it makes to recall the wisdom of the Past. 'For to search and to learn,' saith the poet-philosopher, 'is reminiscence

all.' At the bottom of every religious theory, however wild and savage, lies a perception—dim perhaps, and distorted, but still a perception—of God and immortality."

"And you think that we have all lived before, and all shall live again?"

"I know it," replied the Professor. "My life has been one long succession of these revelations; and I am persuaded that if we would compel the mind to a severe contemplation of itself—if we would resolutely study the phenomena of psychology as developed within the limits of our own consciousness—we might all arrive at the recognition of this mystery of pre-existence. The 'caverns of the mind' are obscure, but not impenetrable; and all who have courage may follow their labyrinthine windings to the light of truth beyond."

Two days after this conversation I left Leipzig for Frankfort. Just as I was taking my seat in the diligence, a man wearing the livery of a college messenger, made his appearance at the

window. He was breathless with running, and held a small parcel in his hand.

"What is this?" I asked, as he handed it to me.

"From Professor Henneberg," he replied. He was proceeding to say more, but the diligence gave a lurch, and rolled heavily forward; the messenger sprang back; the postillions cracked their whips; and in a moment we were clattering over the rough pavement of the town.

There were but two passengers in the interior, beside myself. One was a priest, who did nothing but sleep and read his breviary, and who was perfumed, moreover, with a strong scent of garlic. The other was a young German student, who sat with his head hanging outside the window, smoking cigars.

As I did not find either of my companions particularly prepossessing, and as I had forgotten to furnish my pockets with any literature more entertaining than "Murray's Hand-

book of South Germany," I was agreeably surprised, on opening the packet, to discover a considerable number of pages in my learned friend's very peculiar handwriting, neatly tied together at the corners, and accompanied by a note, in which he gave me to understand that the MSS. contained a brief sketch of some passages in his life which he thought might interest me, and which were, moreover, illustrative of that doctrine of pre-existence respecting which we had been conversing a few evenings before.

These papers I have taken the liberty of styling—

THE RECOLLECTIONS OF PROFESSOR HENNEBERG.

My parents resided in Dresden, where I was born on the evening of the fourth of May, 1790.

My mother died before I was many hours in being, and I was sent out to nurse at a farmhouse in the immediate neighbourhood of

the city. I cannot say that I have any distinct remembrance of the first few years that ushered in this present life with which I am endued. I was kindly treated. I grew in the fields and the sun, like a young plant. My father came regularly every Sunday and Thursday to see me; and I learned to look upon the Frau Schleitz as my mother. When I had reached the age of ten years, I was removed to a large public school in Dresden.

Up to this time I had received no education whatever. I was as ignorant as a babe of two years old. I therefore entered the academy at a period when I was just of an age to be painfully conscious of my inferiority to boys considerably my juniors. Undoubtedly my father did me a great injustice by thus delaying to furnish my young mind with that intellectual nutriment which is as essential to our mental being as wine and meat to our physical nature; but he was eccentric, arbitrary, and a visionary. It was one of his favourite theories

that early childhood should be sacred from the anxieties of learning, and devoted wholly to the acquisition of bodily health; that youth should be appropriated to study; that manhood should be passed in action; and that old age should enjoy repose. Into these four epochs he would have had the lives of all mankind divided; forgetting that between stages so opposite there could exist no harmony of disposition or unity of purpose. Had he been an absolute monarch, he would have compelled his subjects to conform to these regulations. As he was only a German merchant, and possessed entire control over but one creature in the world, he practised his system at my expense.

For the first month or two I suffered acutely. I found myself pitied by the masters and despised by the boys. The latter excluded me from their sports and openly derided my ignorance. When I stood up to repeat my task, I stood where, five minutes before, boys

younger than myself had been reading aloud from Tacitus and Herodotus. When I strove to acquire the rudiments of arithmetic, it was in a room where the least advanced scholar was already occupied upon the problems of Euclid.

To a proud nature such as mine, this state of degradation was intolerable. Though sometimes almost overborne by shame and anguish, I made superhuman efforts to regain the time which had been lost. I was speedily rewarded for my exertions. My progress was astonishing; and, though still far behind the rest, the rapidity with which I mastered all that was given me to learn, and, indeed, the manner in which I frequently anticipated the instructions of the tutors, became the marvel of the school.

My father was wealthy and supplied me liberally with money. This money I devoted wholly to the purchase of books. When the other boys were playing in the grounds of the

academy, I used to steal away to the deserted bed-chambers, or to my accustomed corner in the empty class-room, and there labour earnestly at the acquisition of some of those branches of learning into which I had been but lately inducted, or at which, in the regular course of study, I had not yet arrived. Thus, too, in the morning, before any of my companions were awake, I would draw a volume from under my pillow, or tax my memory to recall all the information which I had gathered during the previous day. By these means I not only continued to add hourly to my store, but I forgot nothing that I had once made my own.

And now let me confess something connected with my progress—something upon which I have often reflected with sensations approaching to terror—something which I have since attempted to analyze, and which has guided me to the interpretation of that mystery in which my subsequent life has been enveloped.

Nothing that I learned was entirely new to me.

Yes, strange and awful as it may appear, I never read a book which did not seem as if it had once been familiar to me. All knowledge vibrated in my soul like the echo of a familiar voice. When my teacher was elucidating a problem, or explaining some of the phenomena of science, I invariably outstripped the sense of his argument, and, taking the words from his mouth, would leap at the conclusion before he had well begun. Many times he has started, questioned me, accused me of previously studying the book; and always I have proved to him that it had never been for an instant in my possession.

I thus obtained a character for natural powers of reasoning which I could not refute, and yet which I felt were undeserved. It was by no internal ratiocination that I arrived at the knowledge which so surprised, not only

my instructors, but myself. The faculty was spontaneous. I had no control over it. It came with all the sudden clearness of conviction, and illumined the subject at once, like a gleam of lightning. I was sometimes bewildered to find how intimately the workings of this comprehension resembled the unsought promptings of memory.

However, I was at this time too young to enter minutely upon so difficult an investigation as that of the operations of the mind, and my thoughts were already charged with undertakings almost beyond their powers. I was therefore content to accept my good fortune without questioning its sources too curiously.

Five years elapsed. During that time I had passed from the lowest bench to the rank of senior scholar at the academy; I had mastered two of the living languages (English and French) besides my own; I was tolerably well-read in the classics; I had gone through the

entire routine of school mathematics; and I was the author of an anonymous volume on Social Philosophy.

At this point of my education, my father, in compliance with my earnest solicitations, transferred me to the University of Leipzig, where I had scarcely entered my name when I received intelligence of his sudden death. My grief was deep and sincere; but it only served to augment my love of knowledge, and to increase the severity of my studies.

I now directed my attention principally towards Oriental languages and Oriental literature. I lived the life of a hermit. I existed only in the past. I avoided the abstractions of the outer world; and I devoted myself entirely to the acquisition of Hebrew, Persian, Hindoo, and Indian learning.

At college, as at school, my efforts were followed by the same rapid and unvarying suc-

cess. I bore away the prize at every public examination, and finally received the highest university honours. Still I had no inclination to leave Leipzig. I continued to occupy my old apartments, to prosecute my old studies, and to lead precisely the same life as heretofore. Thus six years more were added to my term of existence; and at twenty-one years of age, on the death of one of my own instructors, I was by unanimous election inducted into the vacant professorship of Oriental literature.

This unparalleled progress surprised no one so much as myself, for I alone knew the extraordinary manner in which it was accomplished. Knowledge came to me more as a revelation than a study—yet the word 'revelation' is inadequate to express my meaning. *Memory*, I repeat—*memory* is the only mental process resembling that to which I owed my success.

I had one friend, by name Frank Ormesby. He was an Englishman, and had entered the

university about a year later than myself. Young, brilliantly gifted, and saturated with the spirit of German literature, he had chosen to finish his education at Leipzig. But for this friendship I should scarcely have had a tie of human affection in common with the world around me.

Frank Ormesby was the last male descendant of an old aristocratic family in the West of England. His ancestors had suffered extensive losses during the period of the Commonwealth, and had regained but a small portion of their property at the hands of the graceless and profligate Charles. Two or three farms, with the old manor-house and park, alone remained to that family whose loyal cavaliers had not hesitated to arm their tenantry and melt their hereditary plate in the service of the Stuarts. Small as it was, the estate was rendered still less valuable through the extravagance of some later Ormesbys; and, when Frank succeeded to it,

was so encumbered as scarcely to yield him the few annual hundreds which were necessary to supply the expenses of a gentleman.

In this remote and melancholy manor, shut in by dark old trees, and attended only by a governess and one or two old servants, my friend's young sister lived, in deep seclusion. The pair were orphans; and they were all in all to each other. Frank had not a thought in which the happiness of Grace was not considered; Grace looked up to Frank as to a paragon of truth and talent.

During the long walks which we used sometimes to take beyond the confines of the city, Frank delighted to talk to me of his sister's gentleness and beauty; and I delighted to listen to him. It was a topic of which we were never weary, and which no discussion could exhaust.

Secluded as I was from the gentle influences of female society, these conversations produced

a profound impression upon my heart. I learned to love without having beheld her. I suffered myself to dream golden dreams. I hung upon his words with the enraptured faith of a devotee before the shrine of a veiled divinity, and yielded up my whole soul to the dangerous fascination.

At length the time came when Frank must return to England. When I must be once more alone—more alone than if I had never possessed his friendship!

One evening we were loitering through the garden of the university, arm-in-arm, silent and melancholy. Each knew the other's thoughts, and neither spoke of parting. Suddenly Frank turned, and said:—

"Why don't you come with me, Henneberg? The trip to England would do you good."

I smiled, and shook my head.

"Ah! no," I said, "I am a snail, and the college is my shell."

"Nonsense!" he replied. "You must come. I will have it so. Who knows? Perhaps you and Grace may fall in love with each other!"

The hot blood rushed up to my face; but I made no answer. Frank stopped short, and looking earnestly into my eyes——

"Heinrich," he said, "I seem to have spoken lightly, but I have thought deeply. Could this union be, it would fulfil the wish that lies nearest to my heart."

My pulse throbbed—my eyes became suffused with tears. Still I remained silent.

"Will you come?" he asked.

I said, "Yes."

Never before had I travelled beyond the limits of my native Saxony, and so far from feeling any of the anticipative delight of youth, I shrank from the journey with the nervous timidity of a recluse. Frank rallied me upon my apprehensions.

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"My good fellow," he exclaimed, "you have shut yourself up in this old German college till you are little better than a dusty moth-eaten folio yourself! You are but twenty-one years of age, and you are pale and wise as a philosopher of eighty. Your clothes hang about you like an old-fashioned binding; your face is as yellow as parchment; you bow as if you were making an Eastern salaam; and the very character of your handwriting is distorted into a resemblance of Oriental characters. This will never do! You must become rejuvenescent, and make up your mind to descend for once to the level of other people. Be a martyr, Heinrich, and write to your tailor for a dress-suit!"

Having resolved to travel round by the Rhine, we proceeded first of all to Mayence.

On the morning of the third day, an incident occurred which, to my thinking, was deeply significant. It wanted more than two hours of noon. The carriage was ascending a precipi-

tous hill, and we were walking some fifty yards in advance. The air was deliciously cool and fragrant, and we paused every now and then to look upon the fair level prospect of wood and vineyard which we were leaving behind. The birds were singing in the green shade of the lindens beside the road. An old man and a young girl passed us with pleasant words of greeting, and we heard the voices of the vintagers down in the valley. Frank was in high spirits, and sprang forward as if he dared the toilsome hill to weary him.

"See!" he cried, "we shall soon reach the summit, and then I predict that we shall be rewarded by the sight of a divine landscape! Mayence must be close at hand, and we shall see the broad, bright rushing Rhine below."

And he began singing in a loud, clear voice, that song beloved of German students, "To the Rhine—to the Rhine!" I smiled at his fresh-hearted enthusiasm, and followed him somewhat more slowly. It was,

indeed, as he had said; and on a sudden we beheld, close under our feet, the streets—the cathedral of Mayence—the wide rapid river—the long boat-bridge—the lordly façade of the Palace of Biberich—the banks clothed with plants and autumn flowers—the hurrying steamers with their canvas awnings and their clouds of fleecy smoke—and then, far away, the shadowy hills, the vineyards, the riverside villages, and the winding Rhine flashing along for miles and miles into the far distance. It was a glorious prospect; but the effect which it produced upon me was fearful and unexpected. I stood quite still and pale; then, uttering a wild cry, I clasped my hands over my eyes and cast myself upon the ground.

I distinctly remembered to have seen that very prospect—those spires and towers—that bridge—that red-hued palace—that far landscape, in some past stage of being, vague, dark, for-

gotten as a dream! When they came to lift me from the spot where I had fallen, they found me in a state of insensibility; and when I recovered my consciousness, it was in a bed-chamber of the Königlicher Hof, a little road-side tavern just outside the city. I did not tell Frank the real cause of my illness. I alleged a sudden giddiness as the reason of my cry when falling. He fancied that it might have been a slight sun-stroke, and I allowed him to think so. The next morning I had sufficiently recovered to resume the journey. We now proposed to take a Rhine steamer to Cologne; but as the boat would not start before the afternoon, I yielded to my friend's persuasions, and went with him to visit the Cathedral of Mayence.

All here was so cool and still, that I felt my troubled heart grow calmer. The sun-light coming in through the stained win-dows flickered in patches of gold and

purple on the marble pavement, and cast long lines of light through the dim cloisters beyond. The sacristan was putting fresh flowers on the altar; the great organ, with its front of shining pipes, was quite dumb and breathless, like a dead giant. Some little flaring tapers were burning on a votive stand beside the door; and an old beggar-woman, with her crutches lying beside her on the ground, was devoutly kneeling before the altar. Leaving these, we hurried through the dirty narrow streets of the town, and sat under the shadow of some leafy walnuts on one of the hills looking over the Rhine. Here we watched the women spinning at their doors, and my friend recited Schiller's wondrous ballad, "The Cranes of Ibycus."

Thus the morning passed away, and in a few hours more we were gliding along the broad current, between vineyards and rocks, and ruined blank-eyed towers; islands with trees dipping down to the water; quaint old

towns, with gothic spires; and sloping forests of the oak and pine.

But there is no need that I should describe the Rhine to you, O my friend, for whom I write these brief pages of troubled memories! Since those days of my youth, you, too, have traversed the scenes of which I speak—you, too, have felt the influence of their beauty sink like dew upon the arid sands of your thirsty heart. If I say that we went on and on, past Coblentz and Andernach, and Bonn—that we stayed for a day at Cologne; that we there hired a vehicle to transport us to Clêves; and that from thence we proceeded along the smooth roads of Holland, you will recall sufficient of your own experience to follow in our track, and to imagine the feelings with which I, a hermit-student, must have contemplated such varied and remarkable scenery.

From Rotterdam we took the steamer for England, and in rather more than a fortnight

from the date of our departure, arrived one sultry evening in London.

"Shall we stay here for a few days, that I may show you some of the wonders of our great city?" asked Frank, as we sat at supper in a dismal sitting-room at the back of a great gloomy inn in the neighbourhood of St. Paul's Cathedral.

But I felt stunned by the roar and hurry of the streets through which we had just passed.

"Ah, no!" I said; "I am not fit for this place. So much life oppresses me. Let us go quickly to your old quiet home. I shall be happier amid the dim alleys of your park, or dreaming over the books in your library. I need peace—peace and rest!"

* * * * * *

It was already evening when we reached the gates of Ormesby Park. They were very

rusty old gates, and creaked mournfully upon their hinges as we rolled through them. A white-headed man crept out of the dilapidated lodge to admit us, and stood looking after the chaise in feeble wonder, as it proceeded up the avenue.

"Poor old Williams!" said Frank, leaning back with a sigh. "He has quite forgotten me!"

"What superb trees!" I exclaimed, looking up at the gigantic branches overhead.

"They *are* beautiful!" replied my friend, more cheerfully. "I have often been tempted, I confess, to cut down the old timber; but now I vow it shall never be desecrated by the axe. See! there you catch a glimpse of the house."

I leaned forward, and just saw it for a moment through a passing gap. It was an antique Elizabethan building, with gable-ends and large bay windows, and a terraced garden in front.

"I think I know at which window Grace is standing!" said Ormesby. "I wonder how she looks! To think of its being five years since we parted!"

I began to get nervous.

"Does she know that I am coming?" I asked, hurriedly.

Frank burst into a hearty laugh.

"Know that you are coming! to be sure she does; and she will be surprised enough when she sees you. Why, man, I told her that I was going to bring the Professor of Oriental Literature with me—a grave old gentleman of eccentric habits, but profound learning, whom I hoped she would try to like for my sake!"

"My dear Frank," I said hastily, "it was unnecessary, I think, to place your friend in so ridiculous a position at his first interview . . ."

"Hush!" said he, grasping me affectionately by the hand; "do not say that. She

has long known how I love and value Heinrich Henneberg. And now jump out, for here we are at last!"

We had driven round to the back of the house, where two or three old servants were gathered to receive us. Frank ran past them, and taking a lady in his arms, who was standing near the door, covered her cheeks and brow with kisses.

"Grace, my darling Grace!" he said, bending his proud head fondly down towards her.

"My dear brother!" replied the lady, hiding her face upon his shoulder, and sobbing aloud.

I turned away; for I had no place there, and my own eyes filled with tears.

"So tall too!" I heard him say; "so tall and so beautiful! So changed; and yet the same dear Grace I left five years ago!"

"Five years ago!" echoed the lady in a low voice.

"But here is Professor Henneberg, waiting to be introduced to you," said Frank, drawing her arm through his. "Heinrich, this is my dear and only sister: Grace, welcome this gentleman—he is my friend."

It was not because I had heard and thought so much of her already; it was not even for her beauty, rare and winning though it was—No, it was for none of these, but for the earnest soul looking out from her dark eyes, that I succumbed in one moment to that deep and passionate tide of love which has never ceased since then to overflow my heart.

Confused and silent, I could only bow to her; and when she extended her hand—that small white hand—what could I do but hold it, tremblingly and irresolutely in mine, and then stoop down and kiss it?

"My friend has saluted you after our German fashion, Grace," said Frank smiling, as he saw her embarrassment and mine.

"Abroad we kiss the hand of a lady, and we only shake that of a gentleman. If he be a heart-friend, or a brother, we rub our rough beards together in a fraternal embrace."

A little while afterwards, when we were sitting in a window overlooking the old park, the lady, after glancing doubtfully towards me twice or thrice, laid her hand gently on her brother's arm, and said—

"But where, my dear Frank, is the other gentleman—the Oriental scholar—whom you prepared me to receive?"

A malicious smile hovered over his lips, and danced in his dark eyes.

"This is the learned Professor in person," he replied, laughingly. "Speak for yourself, friend; and if Grace continues to doubt your identity, reply with a spirited harangue in Syriac or Sanskrit! By the way, sister mine, can you discover who it is that Henneberg resembles? From the moment I first saw him, I knew that I had been used to a

face strangely like his, 'e'en from my boyish days'; yet for my life I cannot tell whose that face may be."

"Nor I," replied Grace Ormesby. "But Professor Henneberg's face seems not unknown to me."

"How beautiful this is!" I exclaimed, stepping out upon the balcony, and looking over the wide, wooded country, the distant hills, the park, and the quaint, formal garden. The moon was just rising on one side, and the red sun sinking slowly on the other.

"It is a truly English scene," replied the lady; "but I suppose it will not bear comparison with your German forests and vineyards. We have, however, many charming drives around, and some points of view that might delight even a poet."

"*Even* a poet!" repeated Frank, smiling. "Why, I think poets are more easily delighted than other people. There is no scene so dull, and no subject so dry, but they will contrive

to throw a grace and glory upon it. We must take you round to-morrow, Henneberg, to the grotto which we, when children, used to call our Hermitage. And there is the old chapel for you to see; it lies down in that hollow, within the park boundaries. It is a picturesque old place enough. The tombs of our predecessors are ranged all down the side-aisles, and their rusty armour hangs above them—

> 'The knights' bones are dust,
> And their good swords rust;
> Their souls are with the saints I trust!'"

"Then your library of old folios!" I exclaimed; "I must see that before anything. How delightful to stroll out with some quaint black-letter pamphlet redolent of the dust of centuries, and lie reading in the shade of yonder trees!"

The lady smiled, and added:—

"Where you will moralize, like 'the melancholy Jaques'—

> ‘ Under an oak, whose antique roots peep out
> Upon the brook that brawls along this wood.’

But I ask your pardon; I should not quote Shakespeare to a foreigner.”

“ Miss Ormesby is mistaken, if she supposes that we Germans are ignorant of the works of her great poet!” I said, earnestly. “ Shakespeare—to use the words of a great German critic—was naturalised in Germany the moment that he was known. The same critic—Augustus Wilhelm von Schlegel—enjoys the distinction of having first directed the attention of Europe to the philosophical significance of his dramas. Before Schlegel, Lessing wrote upon Shakespeare; Herder has studied him; Tieck began a series of letters upon his plays; and Göethe, in his ‘ Wilhelm Meister,’ has spoken of him with reverence and enthusiasm.”

“ This is indeed a pleasant tale for English ears!” exclaimed the lady, with a flush upon her pale cheek; “ and we should

be proud to hear it. I wish I spoke your language as well as you speak ours."

And so the conversation changed, and flowed on into other channels, like a mountain-stream, now winding past a little quiet isle, now dashing over the steep rocks, now murmuring softly through the rushes near a cottage-door, and anon wandering out and losing itself in the deep sea. Thus the hours glided away unnoticed, and it was nearly midnight when I withdrew.

Mine was a large dark room, with an enormous bed, like a hearse, in the centre of the floor. Two ebony cabinets, richly inlaid, stood on either side of the fireplace. An antique Venetian mirror was suspended above the toilette-table, and some high-backed chairs and *moyen age* fauteuils were scattered about in various directions.

Glancing round at these details, I walked over to one of the casements, threw it open,

and, leaning forward into the moonlight, thought of the lady whom I already dared to love. It was long past midnight when I returned into the chamber, and dropped upon a chair:

> "Benedetto sia 'l giorno, e'l mese, e l'anno,
> E la stagione, e'l tempo, e l'ora, e 'l punto,
> E'l bel paese, e'l loco, ov' io fui giunto
> Da due begli occhi che legato m'hanno!"*

I exclaimed, in the impassioned words of Petrarch, as I bent my head down upon my hands, and whispered one name softly to myself.

After a time I looked up again; my eyes wandered listlessly round the room, and encountered a picture which I had not before observed. I rose; I advanced towards it; I raised the candle . . . a freezing sensation

* "Blessed be the day, the month, the year, the season, the weather, the hour, and point of time, and the beautiful country, and the place where I was taken captive by those two beautiful eyes which have enchanted me!"

came upon me; my eyes grew dim; my heart stood still. In that portrait I recognized—*myself!*

Suddenly I turned and rushed to the door; but, as my fingers closed upon the handle, I paused.

"What folly!" I said. "It can be nothing but a mirror!"

So I nerved myself to return.

Once more I stood before it, and surveyed it steadily. It was no mirror, but a picture—an old oil-painting, cracked in many places, and mellow with the deepened tones of age. The portrait represented a young man in the costume of the reign of James the first, with ruff and doublet. But the face—the face! I sickened as I gazed upon it; for every feature was mine! The long light hair, descending almost to the shoulders; the pallid hue and anxious brow, the compressed lips and fair moustache, the very form and expression of the eye—all, all my own, as

though reflected from the surface of a mirror!

I stood fascinated, spellbound: my eyes were riveted upon the picture, and its eyes, glance for glance, on mine. At length the tide of horror seemed to burst its bounds; a groan broke from my lips, and, dashing my lamp upon the ground that I might behold the face no more, I flew to the window, and leaped out into the garden.

All that night, hour after hour, I wandered through the avenues and glades of the park, startling the red-deer in their midnight covers, and scattering the dew-drops from the ferns as I passed by.

The morning dawned ere long; the sun shone; the lark rose singing; and the day-flowers opened in the grass. At seven o'clock I bent my steps towards the house, weary, haggard, and depressed. Frank met me in the garden.

"You are early this morning, Heinrich,"

he said, gaily. Then, observing something strange in my expression, "Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "what is the matter?"

"I have not slept at all," I replied, in a hollow tone; "and I have suffered the torture of a hundred sleepless nights in one. Come with me to my bedchamber, and I will tell you."

We went, and I told him. He heard me out in silence, and looked frequently from the portrait to my face. When I had done, he laughed aloud and shook his head.

"I acknowledge," he said, "that the resemblance is striking; and not only the resemblance, but the coincidence; for, to tell you the truth, this is actually the portrait of one of your countrymen—a Baron von Ravensberg, of Suabia, who married a daughter of our house in the year 1614. At the same time, my dear Heinrich, I will hear of nothing supernatural in the matter. It is one of those fortuitous circumstances which

are of daily occurrence; and, after all, the likeness may be, in a great measure, simply national. We know how strongly the peasantry of Scotland and of Ireland are impressed with one physiognomical stamp; and (not to cite the tribes of coloured men, or even the Chinese and Tatars) how remarkably are these facial characteristics imprinted upon the natives of America! The last instance is, indeed, one which admits of wide physiological inquiry. The Americans, gathered together as they are from all the shores of the old world, have, as it were, received a stamp of individuality from the very climate in which they live."

I heard, but scarcely heeded his words. When he had ceased speaking, I looked up as if from a dream.

"It may be all very true, Ormesby," I replied; "but I cannot occupy this room another night."

"Nor is there any occasion that you should,"

said he, cheerily. "Come down to the breakfast-parlour, and I will order the green bedroom to be prepared for you!"

I felt now as if some destiny were upon me; and many days elapsed before I regained my cheerfulness. By degrees, however, the impression wore away, and as I no longer saw, I ceased to think of the picture.

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Oh, thou solitary dream of my life! come back once more, and let me for a brief moment forget the years that have risen up between my soul and thee!

I loved her—shall I say *loved?* Ah, no! I love her still. I shall love her till I die! Let me tell how deep and passionate that love was; how I lived day after day in the sweet

air she breathed; how I sat and watched the inner-light of her dark, earnest eyes; how my heart failed within me, listening to her voice.

Her voice! Ah, that sweet low voice! It vibrates even now upon my ear, and brings the stranger tears back to my eyes! How can I paint the long golden days of that dreamy autumn season, when I went forth by her side through the yellow corn fields, and the pleasant lanes? Sometimes we sat beneath the spreading boughs, while I read aloud to her from Shakespeare, or translated a few pages of Schiller. How my voice rose and trembled as the words gave utterance to the language of my heart!

Then there were happy evenings when we sat by the open windows of the old drawing-room, looking out upon the dusky park and the starry sky; when the harvest-moon shone down upon the stirless trees;

when the nightingale shook her wild song from her little throat hard by; and the drowsy air hung enchanted over all!

At such times Grace would touch the keys of the piano, and sing the ballads of my native land.

Why do I linger thus? It was but a dream—let me tell of my awakening.

At the extremity of my friend's garden there stood an old-fashioned summer-house, shaped like a pagoda, with a gilt ball upon the summit. This point commanded an extensive and beautiful prospect. In front stood the old house, with its carven gable ends and burnished weather-cocks; the garden, curiously planted in formal beds, and interspersed with trees of quaintly-cut pyramidal form; the terraced walks; the spreading park; and, beyond the park, the summits of the blue hills far away. In the summer-house stood a table and two rustic chairs; and just

before the entrance a simple pedestal was erected, whereon a dial, worn and rusted by the storms of many years, told the silent hours by the sun.

Here it was that I sat one sunny morning, face to face with her. An open volume lay beside me on the table. I had been reading aloud, and she was busy with some dainty needlework. I could not see her eyes for the dark curls that fell adown her cheeks.

The book was Chaucer—I remember it well. I had been reading the Knight's Tale, and we had broken off at the death of Arcite. After a few words of admiration, there came a pause; and as I turned to resume the poem, my eyes rested upon her, and I could not remove them. Very silently I sat there looking at her, watching the flitting of her fingers, and the coming and going of her breath; and I asked myself—"Can this be life, or is it nothing but a dream?"

Suddenly, I felt the deep love welling up-

wards from my heart to my lips; and then—then I found myself at her feet, clasping her hands in mine, and saying over and over again, in a quick broken voice, between tears and trembling:—

"Grace! dear, dearest Grace, I love you!"

But she made no answer, and only sat quite pale, and still, and downward-looking, like a marble saint.

"Not one word, Grace—not one?"

Her lips quivered. Slowly she lifted up her face, and fixed her eyes on mine. Oh! how deep they were—how dark—how earnest!

"Heinrich," she said, in a low clear voice, "Heinrich, I loved you long ago—I loved you in imagination, for years before we met."

Surely there was nothing in these words that should not have filled me with delight, and yet they smote upon me with a sensation of indescribable horror.

I had heard them before—ay, and in that very spot!

With the swiftness of lightning it rushed upon me; and in one passing second, as a landscape is seen in the flashes of a storm, I recollected, oh! heavens, not only the place, the hour, the summer-house, the garden; but herself—her words—her eyes! all, all as familiar as they were a portion of my own being!

"Grace! Grace!" I shrieked, springing to my feet, and clasping my hands wildly above my head, "do you not remember?—once before—here, here—centuries ago!—do you not remember?—do you not—do you not remem . . ."

A choking, dreadful feeling arrested my breath; the ground rocked beneath my feet; a red mist swam before my eyes—I staggered—I fell!

I remember nothing of what followed.

* * * * * *

Even now it seems to me as if years passed away between that moment and the period when my consciousness returned. Long passionless years—without a thought, without a hope, without a fear; dark as night, and blank as dreamless sleep!

But it was not so. Scarcely three weeks had elapsed since I was seized with the fever; and so far from having lain there in a passive trance, I had all the time been racked by the burning visions of delirium.

Brought to the very confines of the grave, weak, emaciated, and heedless of all around me, I permitted two or three days to pass away in this state of listless debility, without asking even a question about the past, or daring to dwell for an instant upon the future. I had no strength to think.

Those first days of sanity glided by like waking dreams, and I passed insensibly from drowsy perception to long and frequent slumbers. While awake, I listened idly to the

ticking of the clock, and to the passing footsteps on the stairs; watched the sunlight creeping slowly round the walls with the advancing day; followed, like a child, the quiet movements of my nurse: and accepted, without question, the medicines and aliments which she brought me. I was feebly conscious, too, of the frequent visits of the doctor; and when he felt my pulse, and enjoined me not to speak, I was too weak and weary even to reply.

On the morning of the third (or it might have been the fourth) day, I woke from a long sleep which seemed to have lasted all the night, and I felt the springs of life and thought renewed within me. I looked round the room, and, for the first time, wondered where I was.

The nurse was soundly sleeping in an armchair at my bedside. The room was large and airy. The window was shadowed by a tree, the leaves of which rustled in the

wind. Some bookshelves, laden with bright new volumes, were suspended against the wall; and a small table, covered with phials and wine-glasses, was placed at the foot of the bed.

I asked myself where I had been before this illness, and in one moment I remembered all, even to the last broken words!

I must have given utterance to some exclamation, for my attendant woke, and turned a startled face upon me.

"Nurse," I said eagerly, "where am I?—whose house is this?"

"Hush, sir! this is Dr. Howard's; but you are to keep quiet. Here is the doctor himself!"

The door opened, and a gentlemanly-looking man entered. Seeing me awake, he smiled pleasantly, and took a seat beside my bed.

"I see by your face, my young friend, that you are better," he said. "Did I hear

you asking where you are? You are my guest and patient."

"How came I here?"

"You have had a brain fever, and were removed to my dwelling at my request. By that arrangement I have been enabled to give your case more attention. I live in the village of Torringhurst, two miles from Ormesby Park."

"And Frank, and—and Miss Ormesby?" I began hesitatingly.

"Your friends have been very anxious for you," he said, with some irresolution, as if scarce knowing how to reply. "Mr. Ormesby watched many nights at your bedside. They —they waited till they knew you to be out of danger."

"And then?" I cried eagerly.

"And then they left Ormesby Park for the Continent."

"For the Continent!" I repeated. "Then I must follow them!"

The doctor laid his hand gently on my shoulder. I sank back upon the pillows, utterly powerless; and he resumed:—

"I have promised not to say where they are gone; and—and they do not wish that you should follow."

"But I *will* go! Why should I not? What have I done that I should be treated thus? Oh! cruel, cruel!"

I was so weak and wretched that I burst into tears, and sobbed like a child.

He looked at me gravely and compassionately.

"Herr Professor," he said, taking my hand in his, and looking into my eyes, "you are a man of education and intellect. I well know that to leave you in doubt would be not only the unkindest, but the unwisest thing that I could do. Now listen to me, and prepare yourself for a great disappointment. Shortly before your seizure, you made some observations (owing probably to

the approach of fever) which much shocked and alarmed your friend's sister. It appears, likewise, that a few weeks before, you expressed yourself very strangely with respect to a picture. These two circumstances, I regret to say, have impressed your friends with the idea that you are the victim, I will not say of unsound mind, but of a delusive theory, highly injurious to your own mental and physical well-being, as well as to the happiness of those connected with you. Such being the case, Mr. Ormesby is of opinion that your intimacy with his sister must unavoidably cease; and the better to effect this, he has taken her abroad for a time. Mr. Ormesby entrusted me with this letter for you."

Here is a transcript of the letter :—

"Deeply painful as it is to me thus to address you after so severe an illness, my dear Heinrich, I must write a few lines, entreating

your forgiveness for the apparent unkindness of which I am guilty in thus quitting England before you are sufficiently recovered to wish me farewell. I will leave to my kind friend Dr. Howard the ungrateful task of explaining my motives for this departure; but I can trust only my own pen to describe to you the deep grief which that determination has cost me. Nothing but the sense of a duty still more imperative than that of friendship could have forced me to inflict upon you a disappointment in which I entreat you to believe I have an equal share. My dear old college friend, forgive and still love me, for my attachment to you must and will ever be the same. Perhaps in time to come, when all that has lately passed shall be, if not forgotten, at least unregretted, you will suffer me to resume my old place in your confidence, and will welcome to your hearth and heart

"Your friend,

"Frank Ormesby."

* * * * * *

There are times when this beautiful world seems to put on a mourning garb, as if in sympathy with the grief that consumes us; when the trees shake their arms in mute sorrow, and scatter their withered leaves like ashes on our heads; when the slow rains weep down around us, and the very clouds look old above. Then, like Hamlet the Dane, "This goodly frame, the earth, seems to us a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof, fretted with golden fire, appears no other thing than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours."

And so it was with me, walking solitary and sad beneath the sighing trees in one of the public gardens of Paris.

The dead leaves rustled as I trod, and the bare branches clashed together in the wind. A little to the right flowed the tide of pleasure-seekers. Overhead the clouds hung low and

dark, now and then shedding brief showers.

I was still weak and suffering; but I could not stay in the country she had left. I came hither, seeking change and distraction—perhaps, too, with a vague hope that I might find her. Could I but see her once more; could I but hear the sweet sound of her voice, bidding me (if it must be so) an eternal farewell, I felt I should be more at peace with the world and myself.

But in Paris I had found her not—neither had I found peace, nor hope, nor rest. The clouds had rolled between me and the sun, and every land alike was darkened.

I then felt that I could say with Sir Thomas Brown—"For the world, I count it not an inn, but an hospital; and a place not to live, but to die in." Yet I never reproached her with my sorrow! Nay, I blessed her for the love that had once beamed on me from her eyes, and for the happy, happy times that must return no more.

Think you, my friend, that I have changed since then? No, I love her still, with a love and reverence inexpressible. She believed me mad. It is a hard word—perhaps it was a hard thought—but was it hers?

I cannot tell; yet I think not. At all events, I feel the sweet assurance that she once loved, and that she always pitied me.

Sometimes I feared it might be as she thought. Might not these flashes of strange memory be the fitful precursors of insanity? I reasoned. I examined myself; but I found no inward corroboration. And all this time, even when my heart was breaking, I loved her, and was thankful that I loved. Even then, I would not have changed the memory of that dream for the blank that went before.

> I hold it true, whate'er befall;
> I feel it when I sorrow most;
> 'Tis better to have loved and lost,
> Than never to have loved at all.

Fare thee well, sweet Grace Ormesby—fare

thee well, dear lady of my love! Go from these pages as from my life, and therein be no more seen. Thy pale face and earnest eyes are still present to me through the mists of many years. Yet doth Time with every season steal somewhat from the distinctness of the vision; and as mine eyes grow dim, so doth thine image recede farther and farther into the dusky chambers of the Past. Peace be with thee, lady, wheresoe'er thou art—peace be with thee!

The life of a great city accords ill with a great grief; and yet we do well to mingle with our fellow-creatures, though it be only in the streets of a city where we have no friends. Not the most misanthropic can thread that varying tide without feeling that he is a portion of the many, and that it is his duty to be a worker among men. He has a part to play, and he there knows that he is called upon to play it.

Walking in that deserted alley of the Luxembourg Gardens, within hearing, though not within sight of the living stream beyond, this truth became clear to me, and I said—"I have been idle and a dreamer. Books have been my world. From this present suffering I must be free or die; and in activity alone can I ever find forgetfulness. Now I, too, will work."

And I made up my mind to do the work for which I was fitted. I resolved to write my long-contemplated book on "The Languages and Poetry of the East."

That night my quiet rooms in the dead, old-fashioned Rue du Mont Parnasse, seemed less dreary. It was now almost winter; it had rained at intervals for many days, and the air was very chill. I found a cheerful fire in my sitting-room. The curtains shut out the dismantled garden. I drew my table to the fireplace, trimmed my lamp, took pen and paper, and sketched the outline of my work.

My evening's occupation was followed by a night of sound refreshing sleep; and from this day I recovered rapidly. The next morning found me, for the first time, before the gloomy entrance to the old Bibliotheque Royale, then lodged in the ancient Palais du Cardinal.

I passed through the solemn court-yard, with its little garden, its mounted statue, and its air of classic stillness. I passed on to the reading-rooms, and chose a remote corner by a window. There I took my place amid a busy company, and began my life of authorship in Paris.

Day after day, week after week, I occupied the same place; followed the same train of thought; and resolutely carried out my plan of work. And work rewarded me with a portion of my lost peace. Amid those venerable archives of old learning; amid the wealth of literature amassed from antique days by Francis I., by the Medici, by the Sforzi, by the Visconti, by Petrarch—I lost for

awhile the remembrance of my private sorrows.

Excluded on Sundays from the library, I generally passed those mornings in the Louvre, wandering through the galleries of antiquities; pursuing my studies of ancient history amidst the vases, mosaics, and cameos of the *Musée Grec et Egyptien;* and sometimes, though rarely, mingling with the throngs who on this day frequent the art-galleries.

As the spring-time came, I used to escape on Sundays into the pleasant parks in the neighbourhood of Paris. There, in the sylvan glades of St. Cloud, among the alleys of Vincennes, or in the forest-shades of St. Germains, I used to spend long days with a book and my own thoughts. I was resigned, if not happy; and my work progressed as the weeks and months went by.

There was an attendant at the Biblio-

theque Royale, in whom I took a considerable interest. He was called M. Benoit. I first remarked him for the respectability of his appearance, and for the courtliness of his address; and I was surprised one day to find that he read the oriental languages with facility.

It happened thus:—I had written the name of a rare Arabic work upon a slip of paper—as is the custom of the place—and requested him to procure it for me. He looked at it, and shook his head.

"It is useless, monsieur," he said. "That work is not in the collection. I have been often asked for it, but in vain. If monsieur will write for this work instead, I think he will find its contents very similar."

And he wrote the title of another book upon the back of my paper, and wrote it, moreover, in the Arabic characters.

"You write Arabic?" I exclaimed with amazement.

He smiled sadly.

"I was once a rich man, monsieur," he said, with a sigh, "and my education is all that I have not lost."

After this I had many conversations with M. Benoit, and he frequently visited me at my apartments in the Faubourg St. Germain. I learned that he was the son of a wealthy builder; that he had received a learned and expensive education; that his property had been swept away in the Reign of Terror; and that during the Consulate he had obtained this subordinate situation through the interest of an early college-friend. I compared this poor old man's condition with my own, and learned a lesson from his patient cheerfulness. I found his conversation learned—often profound; and I gradually unfolded to him the plan and purpose of my book and of my opinions.

One evening I had read a chapter aloud to him, and we were arguing upon certain in-

ductions which I had therein made from the system of Zoroaster.

"It is very strange," said M. Benoit; "but it strikes me that we have a manuscript in which the author has anticipated you."

"Indeed!" I said, with some disappointment. "I had hoped that my views were original."

"They may be original, Monsieur Henneberg, without being new," replied the old gentleman; "and I know that they are original; for the manuscript in question has never been copied, and indeed I think has never been read, excepting by myself and the writer."

"Perhaps you are the writer!" I exclaimed, hastily.

"Indeed I am not," he said; "but I knew him well—very well. He was a professor in the College Royale de France, and from him I received the greater part of my education in the Oriental tongues. He was a great sufferer, and he loved me dearly.

I was his favourite pupil—I attended his death-bed. Just before he died he gave the manuscript into my care, and bade me present it to the Bibliotheque Royale. I did so, and read it. It is utterly unknown—it lies amid thousands of others; and I believe no person has ever perused it before or since."

"I should like to see this work," I said.

"*Très bien*," he replied, "I will show it to you to-morrow."

I could not rest that night for thinking of what the old librarian had told me. I felt disquieted that another should have been before me in this path, which I had hitherto believed a virgin solitude. My self-love was wounded; and I rose in the morning feverish and unrefreshed.

Precisely as the hour of admittance arrived, I entered the reading-rooms of the library. I looked around in every direction; but M. Benoit was nowhere to be seen. I tried to read—to work; but in vain. I could not keep

my attention fixed for five minutes together, and I turned my head every instant towards the door.

More than an hour elapsed before he came; but at last he entered the room and advanced to the corner where I was sitting.

"Where is the manuscript, M. Benoit?" I said, eagerly—"the manuscript on Oriental literature which you named to me last evening?"

"It is here, M. Henneberg," he replied, pointing to a packet beneath his arm. "I had some difficulty in finding it, for it has lain there untouched these twenty years, or more!"

Slowly, with the tremulous fingers of age, he untied the papers in which it was wrapped, and placed the manuscript before me.

I opened the leaves at random; I started back; I rubbed my eyes to make sure I was not dreaming.

The handwriting upon those pages was my own!

I think I have already said that mine was a

very peculiar hand. There was no mistaking it; and here it was reproduced before my eyes, in a manuscript written, probably, years before I was born!

By a powerful effort, I mastered my emotion, and said hoarsely:—

"So it was a countryman of yours who wrote this, M. Benoit?"

"A kind friend and master of mine, M. Henneberg," replied the librarian. "Not a countryman."

"Indeed!" I said. "Was he not French?"

"*Ah, mon Dieu!* no; he was a German."

Again I started. I turned to the beginning of the manuscript; my eyes fell upon the first few sentences . . . . I had half expected it. Their import, though not their phraseology, corresponded precisely with the first lines of my own work!

"And pray from what part of Germany did your friend come, M. Benoit?" I asked, with forced composure.

"From the confines of Bohemia."

"And his name?"

"Karl Schmidt."

"May I ask the date of his decease?"

The old gentleman removed his glasses, and brushed a tear from his eyes.

"*Hélas, mon pauvre ami!* He died on the evening of the 4th of May, 1790."

The very date and moment of my birth.

I rose suddenly. I gasped for breath. I felt as if the ground were sinking from beneath my feet . . . .

"Help, my friend!" I gasped—"help! I —I am dying!"

In another moment I had fainted. I was very ill for some days after this; but as soon as I had sufficiently recovered to bear the fatigue of so long a journey, I left Paris for Leipzig. I have never since passed the boundaries of the city walls. Here, in the apartments which I occupied as a youth, I live an aged and an austere man. Here I shall

soon end my "strange eventful history."

Such is the story of my life—a life cursed and withered by glimpses of a past, which is known only to God. I have remembered scenes and people; I have beheld palpable evidences and traces of myself in former stages of my being. Whereunto do these things tend? Will death bring me to a full knowledge of these mysteries? or is this spiritual particle, which men call the soul, destined to migrate eternally from shape to shape, never rising to a higher and diviner immortality? Alas! I know not; neither, friend, canst thou reply to me. Life is a problem; Death, perchance, a word! Will no hand lift the curtain of eternity?

It was nearly dusk by the time I had arrived at the end of the Professor's MSS., and

the castle and church-spires of Gotha were already in sight. Presently the diligence stopped at an inn in the town; a party of young men surrounded the novel-reading student, and bore him off with tumultuous congratulations. The priest alighted, and wished me a civil good evening; and I went to the nearest inn and dined execrably. When I returned to the vehicle to resume my night journey, I found the three vacant places already occupied by three new passengers, and so went on towards Frankfort. About a fortnight after, I went to Baden-Baden, and liked the place so well that I stayed there for some weeks. One day, sitting idly in the salle à manger of the Hotel Suisse, I happened to take up a copy of "Galignani's Messenger." One of the first things that caught my eye was the following announcement —

"May, 1854.

"Died suddenly, on the evening of the 4th inst., in his chambers, at the College of ——, in Leipzig,

Heinrich Henneberg, Professor of Oriental Literature, in the 65th year of his age; greatly beloved and regretted."

And so this was the end. Dead! and on the anniversary of his birth! Some people to whom I have read the foregoing memoir, say that these things are coincidences, and that too much learning touched my poor friend's brain. It may be so; but there was a strange method in his madness after all; and who can tell what revelations in psychology may yet be in store for future generations?

CHAPTER III.

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ALICE HOFFMANN.

MY earliest recollections—and they are of many years ago, for I am no longer young—carry me back to a dark and dirty room in the neighbourhood of Drury Lane. The ceiling was smoke-stained, the paper faded and torn, and the windows, which were never cleaned, admitted no prospect and scarcely any sunshine. There was a battered pianoforte in one corner, of that old-fashioned kind which I knew afterwards was called a clavecin. This was loaded with heaps of yellow dusty music. There were also a bass viol, several violins, and my father's music-

desk, for he was a musician, and played in the orchestra at Drury Lane Theatre. I also recollect that a portrait of Mrs. Billington, and a print of David Garrick, were suspended from the walls, and that my father's easy-chair was generally occupied by a large black cat, the dearest playfellow of my childhood.

I was a lonely, motherless, neglected little creature, without amusement and without education. I could not read. There were some dusty volumes lying about, with curious frontispieces, and portraits of a past generation of actors in strange dresses, scattered at long intervals amid their pages. These I used to look at day by day with hopeless admiration, while I turned over leaf after leaf of those mysterious printed characters which had no meaning for my eyes. I used to see my father reading the newspaper on a Sunday morning, and sometimes smiling over its contents. I never dared to ask him

if I might learn to do the same; for he was harsh and cold; but I have sat for many a silent hour and watched the motion of his eyes along the lines with inexpressible longing.

I have said that these are my earliest recollections; but I seemed even then to have dim remembrances, broken and shadowy enough, of a time long before. Fragments of old rhymes and fairy stories floated in my mind, mingled with the tones of a soft voice; and I loved to connect these scattered links with the weavings of my own fancy. Sometimes, too, when I was lying in my bed, with the moonlight streaming in through the uncurtained window, I woke from pleasant dreams, in which I seemed to see a gentle face, forgotten, yet familiar; and then slept to dream again.

I was very young at this time; not more, I should fancy, than seven years of age; but I never knew the exact date of my birth, nor do I now. The house in which we lived was

let out from kitchen to attic. The ground-floor and shop belonged to a Jew, who made up clothing for the stage, and kept all kinds of hideous masks, glittering dresses, swords and fearful things, for hire. If ever I went out into the street, I hurried past his door with uncontrollable terror. I cannot, even now, recall without a shudder the hideous laugh with which he used to greet my flying steps, or the way in which he lay in wait for my return, thrusting his yellow face through the half-opened door, and asking me if I would not give one little kiss to old Solomon!

I had a beautiful voice. I used to sing all the long day, and delighted, in my father's absence, to repeat, in my clear childish treble, the airs I heard him practising upon the violin. From daily exercise in this amusement, I attained to such proficiency that I could warble the most difficult bravura passages with perfect fluency.

One morning as I was singing, the door opened slowly and softly, and a gentleman looked in.

"Go on, my dear," said he, with the kindest smile in the world; "go on, and sing that pretty tune again for me."

I was silent.

"What! quite dumb?" said he, coming over and taking a seat opposite to me. "Well, if you will not sing, tell me your name."

The gentleman's voice and eyes were so pleasant, that I contrived to stammer:—

"Alice Hoffman."

He looked surprised, and told me that he knew my father quite well; but had never supposed he had a little girl like me. And then he took me on his knee, and kissed my cheek, and shewed me his watch; and so winning my confidence with gentle words, persuaded me to sing to him again. He listened to me very attentively; and when

I had done, asked me to repeat the song. My childish vanity was pleased for the first time, and I sung one of my father's brilliant pieces.

"Thank you, Alice," he said, at the close of my second performance. "You are a good child. Now I will sing you a song in return."

And instantly the gentleman assumed the most comical expression I had ever seen, placed his hands on his knees, and began to sing. I have now no recollection of the words or the air, but I remember dancing and rolling about in ecstasies of mirth. He seemed to tie up every feature into knots, his mouth extended itself from ear to ear, and he poured forth his words as if he had a dozen tongues.

In the midst of my shrill peals of laughter, the door opened suddenly, and my father walked in. The stranger started, and his face instantly returned to its previous good-natured

repose. The merriment died away upon my lips. My father looked sternly amazed, reddened, and bowed with some formality.

"You are surprised to find me here, Hoffman," said the visitor; "but I came to see Solomon down-stairs about some properties, and hearing your child's voice overhead, I stole up-stairs to listen to her."

"It is a poor place, Mr. Grimaldi," said my father, proudly.

"Poor, with this little treasure in it!" exclaimed Mr. Grimaldi, taking me by the hand; "I should think my home rich if I possessed her! What a magnificent voice the child has!"

"Indeed!" said my father, with a glance of cold surprise. "I never heard her sing a note!"

The strange gentleman whistled and stared, and looked from my father's face to mine with a curious expression of bewilderment.

My father turned stiffly towards me:

"*Can* you sing, Alice?" he asked, in a harsh tone.

I faltered, and looked down; but my friend answered for me.

"Sing now," said my father, peremptorily.

I felt I could not utter a note, though I were to be killed for it the next moment; but the gentleman saw my embarrassment, and kindly whispered some words of praise and encouragement in my ear. I began the air I had last been singing; but, alas! at the fourth or fifth bar, my voice and memory failed. I trembled, stopped, and burst into a passion of tears.

"Pooh," said my father, contemptuously, "the child can't sing. She has no more voice than my cat."

The driving wind and rain beat piteously that night against my chamber-window, as I lay shivering upon my little bed, and sobbed myself to sleep.

II.

I know not how it happened, but my father shortly after this discovered that I could sing. I imagine that he must have listened at the doors, and returned to the house some time or other in the middle of the day to do so; for I soon, alas! had a terrible proof of his confidence in my powers.

It might have been perhaps three weeks after Mr. Grimaldi's visit, when the following events took place.

It was winter-time. My father was out as usual. I had a scanty fire burning in the grate, which the old woman who waited on the lodgers from time to time replenished. I was not permitted to have a candle, so I used to sit singing, or strumming on the old clavecin by the faint firelight, till I felt tired or sorrowful enough to go up-stairs to bed. This night I happened to be very weary, so I raked the ashes out somewhat

earlier than usual, crept up softly to my room, and soon fell into a profound and dreamless sleep.

I might have been there some three or four hours, when I was roused by a heavy hand upon my shoulder, and a bright light before my eyes.

"Alice," said a stern loud voice. "Alice, get up directly!"

I was so terrified and confused, that I scarcely knew where I was, and began to cry.

"Stop that noise, child," said my father, in a deep voice that I used to dread. "Get up and dress directly. Do you hear? Be quick!"

And giving me a parting shake, he laid the candle down, and left the room.

Breathless, weeping, and frightened, I obeyed his directions. The night was very cold, and seemed to pierce through me. I strove to wash the traces of tears from my

cheeks, and glanced at the window. All without was intensely black, and a thick mist was drizzling against the panes. I heard my father's step upon the stairs.

"Are you ready?" asked the imperious voice.

I was ready; so I went down-stairs, and there I found my father and another person. The stranger was a large man with a red, cross face, and a coarse voice; and I felt afraid of him.

"Is this the child?" said he. "She's very small."

"So much the better, sir," said my father; "the greater wonder."

"What may be her age now?" asked the stranger.

"Six or seven, I suppose," replied my father, with an odd smile; "but we'll call it five, Mr. Smith, or four if you like it better. No one will be likely to search the register."

And then they both laughed; but I was

ready to cry again, for very terror. I believe my fears were chiefly that I was going to be sold and carried away—so mere a child was I then!

"Well, Hoffman, let's hear her first," said the stranger, when he had done laughing.

"Sing a song, Alice," said my father; "and mind, if you behave now as you did the other day, I'll turn you out of doors into the street!"

The alarm which this threat occasioned me had the effect of giving me a sort of desperate courage. I sang, I know not what; but the stranger nodded his head and rubbed his hands; and my father, instead of scolding me, talked earnestly with him in an under-tone for some minutes.

"Then it is settled, Smith," said my father, triumphantly; "and when shall we begin?"

"No time like the present," said Mr. Smith. "Let her begin to-night."

"To-night!" exclaimed my father; "but it's past eleven!"

"No matter—they never go till three or four in the morning."

"Put on your bonnet, child," said my father. "We are going out."

Oh! how wet, and cold, and slippery it was out in the dark streets! Not a shop was open—scarcely a creature stirring, save now and then a solitary watchman. I remember that dreadful night as well as if it were yesterday: the standing pools of water in the pavement—the long dark streets—the flickering oil-lamps—the misty rain that clung to my hair, and wet my clothes nearly through—the cold raw wind, and the coaches that once or twice rattled past us on the way. It was a long, long distance that we went—and I thought we never should arrive. Then we crossed a bridge over a broad river, with the rain misting down upon the water, and stopped at last before the door of a

large shop, with all its shutters closed, and a lamp hanging outside. Mr. Smith knocked heavily upon the door, and a sleepy-looking man opened it and admitted us. The moment we were inside, I heard a great noise of people talking and laughing, a jingling of glasses, and a sound like hammering upon wood.

"Alice," said my father, stooping down and putting his lips close to my ear, "you are going to sing presently. Do your best, and you shall have a doll; break down, and——"

He said no more, but his voice and look were enough.

In another moment I found myself in a room full of company, and brilliantly lighted. At first, the noise, the heated atmosphere, the glare, the clouds of tobacco-smoke, and the terror I felt, deprived me of all power of observation; but when some moments had elapsed, I began to look round and examine the features of my audience. My father had taken a seat near the door, and I

was placed beside him. Mr. Smith was a long way off at the head of the table, and his appearance was welcomed with a great rattling of glasses. The company consisted of some twenty-five or thirty men; and most of them looked merry and good-natured.

Then Mr. Smith stood up, and said something about my father, and a great deal about me; and I was called upon to sing. I distinctly recollect an old gentleman lifting me up, and placing me standing on a chair, that I might be seen and heard. In doing so, he found how cold and wet I was, and gave me something to taste out of his glass. Whatever it was, it did me good at the time; the faces around me looked smiling and pleasant, and I sang as well as I could. Then there was such a shouting, and jingling, and clapping, that I was almost frightened at first, and thought the gentlemen were angry; but I found, instead, that they wanted another song. Then I sang again, and, having

another sip from my friend's tumbler, felt merry and warm, and became quite happy.

I do not know how many times I could have sung that night; but at last my father said I should not go on any longer, so I was carried into another room, and laid upon a sofa, where I soon fell sound asleep. Almost all the gentlemen had given me money when I was taken away, and many had kissed me, and said: "Good night, little one;" and my heart was lighter, and my pocket heavier than I had ever known either before.

The next morning, very early, my father took me home, and at night we went again. He was now kinder to me than usual; but I was not permitted to keep the money I nightly received, and I never had the doll.

I cannot tell how long I continued to sing at the tavern. The first night seems burnt into my memory, with its hopes and fears, griefs and pleasures; but of the succeeding

evenings my recollection is very imperfect. They seem all blended confusedly together; but I imagine, from the seasons of the year, that I must have been in the regular habit of going there for at least six months, when an event occurred that changed the whole course of my life.

It was summer-time. I was at home in the middle of the day, when Mr. Grimaldi, whom I had never seen since the first time he came, entered the room abruptly, and sat down beside me.

"Little Alice," said he, and his kind face was pale and troubled, "you must put on your bonnet and come out with me."

I timidly said that I dared not, for I had to go out with my father at night.

"Ah! yes—I know—poor child, poor child," he muttered; "what a life!—what degradation! But, indeed, you must come, Alice. I am going to take you to my house, and we have no time to lose."

I longed to go with him; but I was afraid my father would be angry.

"No, Alice," he replied very gravely; "your father will not be angry, my child."

So I went. There was a chaise at the door, into which he lifted me, and we drove rapidly away. As we turned the corner of the street, I saw a crowd coming along, surrounding four watchmen, who were carrying what seemed to me to be a sleeping man upon a narrow board; but Mr. Grimaldi laid his hand suddenly over my eyes, and I felt the hand tremble. When he removed it we were in another street, and the crowd had disappeared. I asked him why he did so; but he made no reply. We then went along many streets and roads, and out into the country, among green fields, and lanes, and cottages; and stopped at last at the door of a pretty house, where a lady came out and welcomed us. She looked surprised at seeing

me, but her husband whispered in her ear, and then she kissed me too, and took me into the garden. She seemed very kind, but also very sorry for me; and that I could not understand. It was a happy day, and I was delighted with everything I saw; but I dreaded every moment lest I should hear my father's angry voice inquiring for me; and this fear damped all my enjoyment.

But I never heard that voice in praise or blame again. My father was not angry with me for going away with Mr. Grimaldi into the green fields. He was dead, and that was his body I had seen borne along the streets, on its way home from the theatre.

III.

Although my father had never shown me any great affection, I was as much grieved at hearing of my loss as any child can be that does not understand the meaning of that strange word

—death. But Mr. and Mrs. Grimaldi were such kind and gentle friends, that I fear I soon forgot him. At first, too, I am ashamed to say, I regretted the nightly excitement of the tavern—the cakes, the presents, the applause.

Mrs. Grimaldi was the first to discover how utterly ignorant I was; and I often heard her speaking with her husband on the subject. One day when he came home after a morning rehearsal at Drury Lane, he called me to him, and taking me upon his knee, said:—

"Little Alice, you are going to school."

"Away from here?" I cried in terror, for I was perfectly happy now, and never wished to leave my adopted home.

"Yes, Alice," said he kindly; "a long way from here. Don't cry, my darling; people must learn to read and write; and I have been speaking about you at the theatre among your poor father's old friends, and they have all offered to pay for your going to a

beautiful school, where music is taught, and where you will learn to make good use of that pretty voice of yours. Don't cry, Alice"— for I was sobbing as if my heart would break. "You will be very happy, for there are many learners in this school, all of whom will be players and singers by-and-by; and it is in a beautiful country called Germany."

"But can't I come and see you every Sunday, Mr. Grimaldi?" said I, clasping my arms about his neck, and weeping still.

My friend laughed, and told me that it was impossible; for Germany was a great way off across the sea. And then he told me about vineyards and castles, and the river Rhine; and soon made me forget my grief in the prospect of departure.

However, when the time came that I must go, I was almost distracted with sorrow. I was taken in a coach from Finchley, where Mr. Grimaldi lived, back to London, and

through some dirty streets to a dark gloomy wharf, where was a trading-vessel, crowded with busy sailors, bales of goods, and noisy porters. My kind friend put me on board, kissed me a great many times, and with tears in his eyes bade me farewell.

I was very unhappy; and after we had set sail, very ill. I remember lying in my berth, and crying for grief and sickness through many days and nights. At length the motion of the ship grew less uneasy, and one morning, when I awoke, the vessel was quite still. We had arrived at Antwerp.

There was a great noise on board, for the vessel was unlading; and when I ventured up on deck, the captain told me rather gruffly that I had better keep down in the cabin till he could take me on shore.

By-and-by he came for me, and we went across a large quay, where there were a great many people, all speaking a strange tongue; so that I was quite frightened, and

clung to the captain's hand. Then he took me to a tavern, where we dined with a number of other people at a long table, and he told me it was a table d'hôte; but I did not know what that meant, unless it had something to do with the dinner, where we had jam with our meat and vegetables, and thin soup and sour cabbages, none of which I liked at all.

After this we went to a coach-office, where he paid some money for me; and then into a yard, where a great unwieldy vehicle was standing. There the captain gave me a ticket, which he said secured my place all the way; a paper in a little case, which he told me was my passport; a purse with some money; and a bag of sweet biscuits. Then he put me into a comfortable corner, shook my hand very kindly, bade me good-bye and went away.

Now I was more lonely than ever. It was already evening. Two or three other pas-

sengers took their places inside, but not one spoke a word of English. The hostlers and postboys shouted; the horses made a great clattering, and away we went. I soon fell asleep, waking only now and then to find that it was dark night, and that all my companions were asleep likewise. The next morning we got out at a dirty inn, in a dirty village, and had breakfast. Then we went on again for many weary miles, over a flat dull country with canals and windmills, and great herds of cattle, over and over again.

So, with the same routine, we travelled for some days; when one morning we all had to show our passports, and allow our boxes to be opened by a company of soldiers. I afterwards knew that we then passed the frontier, and went into Germany; but at the time I could not tell what it all meant, and discerned no difference in the strange language.

The scenery thenceforth became more beautiful, and for the first time I beheld

mountains, vineyards, and waterfalls. But the perpetual travelling wearied me so much, that at last I scarcely heeded where we went.

At length we came one evening to a pretty town with churches and white buildings, at the foot of a steep acclivity; and here they made me understand that I was to alight, and that the name of the town was Schwartzenfelden.

I was put down at a large hotel, my box was deposited by my side, the coach rolled away through the narrow streets, and I was left alone. Presently a waiter came out, and led me into the house. In the entrance-hall I found a man, who took my box in one hand and me by the other, and so went out and along the streets.

We presently stopped before a large white mansion. I was shown into a spacious parlour, where an elderly lady and a number of young girls were sitting at needle-

work. The lady rose and took my hand between both of hers.

"And so you are our little new friend, Alice Hoffman?" she said kindly. "You come in good time; for we were just going to supper, and I daresay you are hungry after your long journey."

She then helped me to change my dusty travelling-clothes, and took me back to the sitting-room, where we supped.

When the meal was over, the youngest of the party read prayers aloud in German, and the lady handed me a book.

"There is an English psalm-book for you, my child," she said, kindly; and I blushed; for I could not read, and I was ashamed to say so.

I saw her glance keenly at me, and then at the book, and I felt that she had guessed my secret; but she said nothing. When we rose from our knees, she kissed us all upon both cheeks, and we went to bed. There was one

young girl who could speak a little English, and she occupied the bed next to mine. She told me that the eldest scholars slept in this dormitory, and that I was placed with them because it was feared I might be teased by those of my own age, none of whom understood a word of my language. She told me, also, that our matron's name was Madame Kloss; that we lived in the dominions of the Grand Duke Wilhelm of Schwartzenfelden; and—and—a great deal more, but I fell asleep to the sound of her voice.

IV.

I pass over those years of education, school pleasures, and school griefs, that, like a bridge, unite child-life to womanhood. The sketch of a day, of a week, suffices for a record of years. Time passed gently on; and amid the same round of occupations, the same friends, the same teachers, and, with few exceptions, the same schoolfellows, I grew

in age and knowledge, till the lapse of ten happy years found me in the first bloom of youth and hope. My voice, from the first, had been held in high estimation by our singing-master. Ten years of skilful tuition had developed it into a soprano of such sweetness, flexibility, and compass as, it was said, had never before been heard within the walls of the academy.

Nor, though the education afforded by the academy was expressly musical, were the more plain, and not less necessary branches of knowledge neglected. French, English, and Italian were taught in the best manner; and, of course, writing, arithmetic, history and geography. On Sundays we all went hand-in-hand to the neighbouring church, and with our youthful voices swelled the solemn hymns and sweet responses. In the evening we read aloud by turns from the Bible. On Wednesdays, we had a half-holiday, when we made little excursions to the forest or the

river-side; and at night we had hot *kuchen* for supper.

Such was the school when I entered it—a lonely, ignorant, fatherless child, sent thither by the bounty of strangers. Such was it at the time when I resume my narrative, when I was perhaps seventeen or eighteen years of age. I had heard at long intervals during this period from my kind friend and patron, Mr. Grimaldi, and always with the same unwearied kindness and paternal solicitude. His letters told of many changes—of domestic sorrow, of sickness, of a checkered and a fatiguing life. At last they ceased altogether; and after a time I heard that he was dead. I grieved much for him, and often. To this day, I think of him with love and gratitude. So ended my connection, for life, with the country of my birth.

Herr Stolberg was one of the finest musicians in Germany. He held the appointment of chapel-master to the Grand Duke, and ex-

amined the classes of the academy once in every month. We were all in great awe of his red ribbon, his quick black eyes, his harsh voice, and his impatient temper. His compositions were singularly beautiful. He had studied under Beethoven, won the golden medal at the Strasbourg Festival, and had lately produced a cantata on the anniversary of the Grand Duke's wedding-day.

I was sitting one morning in the class-room with some of my elder school-fellows, when the door opened suddenly, and Herr Stolberg walked in, preceded by Madame Kloss. He laid his hat on a table, and drew a paper from his pocket.

"Ladies," he said in his quick, decisive tone, "I have the honour to inform you that, in consequence of the departure of Mademoiselle Uhden for Berlin, there will shortly be a vacancy for a first soprano in the choir of the Ducal Chapel. It is the gracious pleasure of His Highness the Grand Duke to select a lady

from this academy to fill the situation; and I am therefore directed to announce to you, that as many as desire to compete will be heard on this day week in the music-room of the institution. A selection from the *Messiah* of Handel and the *Creation* of Haydn has been appointed for each candidate to sing; and His Highness will attend in person at your performance."

With this, Herr Stolberg laid the music-list on the desk of Madame Kloss; bowed once more all round; and left the room as abruptly as he had entered it.

I need not say what an excitment raged among the soprani of the Schwartzenfelden Academy during the week that succeeded this announcement. Many of the girls said that it was useless to compete with me, since I had the finest voice there. But they practised, nevertheless; and nothing was heard from morning till night but the selections from Haydn and Handel. For my part, I scarcely

sang a note. I felt that rest and thought would aid me better than practice.

The week passed by, and the day of trial came. In the morning, I went out and wandered by myself in the wood that lay beyond the town. Here all was so still—so holy. Confidence and peace passed suddenly into my breast. I wept. I could have sung then, and sung as I had for days but faintly pictured to myself. But I would not break the enchanted silence of the place. I hastened back to the academy, and waited in the library till I was summoned to dress for the evening. There were five competitors besides myself. Three sang very well, and the other two indifferently. The best was a young girl named Rebecca Leo. Her father was a Jewish merchant of great reputed wealth. Rebecca was not very happy in the school. Many of the pupils avoided the Jewess, whose father they called *Der Wucherer*. We had often done each other little

kindnesses. She was lonely; I pitied her, and she loved me dearly.

At six o'clock we were in the music hall. Herr Stolberg sat at the piano; the students occupied benches at the extremity of the room; Madame Kloss and the teachers were ranged along one side of the platform, and we, the performers, at the other. At a quarter past six the Grand Duke entered with his suite; the list of our names was placed before him; and we began. My name was fourth in succession, so I had some little time to wait. I became painfully nervous. At length a gentle hand was laid upon my arm.

"It is your turn, Alice," said Rebecca.

I rose and crossed to the piano. The Grand Duke looked at me through his double opera-glass. I thought I should have fallen; and laid my hand upon the instrument for support. A hand was laid upon it and instantly withdrawn. I turned, and saw Herr Stolberg gazing at me with an unwonted cordiality in

his dark eyes. He pretended to be arranging some music near where my hand was laid.

"Fear nothing, Fräulein Alice," he muttered in a low voice. "You will succeed."

This unexpected encouragement from the formidable *maestro* almost took away my breath. In another moment he had commenced the symphony, and I began. I was so terrified that I know not how I sang the opening bars; indeed, I have no recollection of singing them at all. I was in a whirlwind —concert-room, Grand Duke, music, all vanished from before my eyes. After a few moments, I seemed to hear the silver tones of my own voice rising above the accompaniment, like a bird from the forest—as if some other person were singing, and I were listening. Gradually this sensation left me. I fancied myself once more in the still wood; the sense and majesty of the words seemed again unfolded to me; and my enthusiasm poured itself forth in that inspired song in which the people

of Zion are bidden to "rejoice greatly!"

When I had concluded, my heart was beating, it is true, but no longer with apprehension. The other five looked from me to one another; the eyes of Madame Kloss were full of tears; and a burst of half-uttered bravos proceeded from the end of the hall where the male students were seated.

"Was I not right, Fräulein Alice?" said Herr Stolberg, as he came over to me, after speaking for a moment with the Grand Duke. "Take my arm, that I may introduce you to his Highness. You are elected."

V.

With the appointment of first soprano to the Chapel Royal, I also received that of sub-professor of singing to the academy. I was consequently removed from the pupil's dormitory, and allowed a separate bed-chamber, with a sitting-room attached. In the latter a small piano was placed for my accommodation, and I

was henceforth permitted, by the laws of the academy, to take private pupils. I had five or six before three weeks had elapsed. This unusual good fortune was in some measure the result of my chapel appointment; for, on the departure of Mademoiselle Uhden, three families instantly transferred their patronage to me, as her successor.

Life was now all happiness, and fate smiled upon me. His Highness repeatedly honoured me with his approbation, and the Grand Duchess frequently sent for me after evening service, to sing her favourite *morçeaux* from the oratorios of Handel, and the masses of Mozart. They were a very unassuming, domestic couple—dignified, it is true, but glad to lay aside the ceremonies of state, and ever ready themselves to take part in a glee or motett. At last, it became the rule for me to attend in the drawing-room every Sunday evening; and as Herr Stolberg was likewise invited, we went together. Thus

we came to be—I had almost said, friends; but that is not the word; for though the great *maestro* was, in his abrupt way, kind and even familiar, I could never forget his fame, his superior knowledge, and the dignity of his appointment in the palace. Besides, he was forty years of age, and to a girl of seventeen that appears no inconsiderable seniority. But there is another person whom I have hitherto delayed to name. I would break off even now, rather than . . . . But hesitation is useless, and I can avoid the subject no longer.

The Baron von Bachhoffen, master of the horse to his Highness the Grand Duke, was the youngest nobleman in the royal suite. I never sang in the chapel, but I saw him there; my attendance was never commanded at the palace, but he was there also. The families where I taught were frequently invited to the royal circle. I seldom went to their houses, but I encountered him either going or coming; and sometimes

he would visit them when he knew that I was giving the lesson. It would be useless for me to deny that these silent attentions dwelt more upon my mind than I would then confess even to myself. I tried not to think of them; I left myself no idle moments; I read, practised, conversed more than ever with my young friends in the academy, and fancied I should succeed in banishing his image from my mind. The baron was very young—not yet of age. He was fair, boyishly fair, and his clear blue eyes wore an expression of tenderness, that sank strangely into my heart. Besides, he was the most accomplished gentleman of the court—the best rider, the finest shot, the most graceful dancer in the minuet, the readiest wit, the sweetest singer. It is no wonder that he should win the heart of an obscure foreigner, whose only recommendations were her youth, her innocence, and her voice.

At the palace, it was found that his voice harmonised deliciously with mine; and when

but a few were present, and the evening was very private, his Highness used often to request that the baron would be so obliging as to sing a duet from the *Creation* or the *Mount of Olives*, with Mademoiselle Hoffman.

Oh the bright, bright dream of my youth! One day he took my hand in his and kissed it, as we stood in a recess half hidden by a curtain, looking over some music in an ante-room at the palace. I felt that kiss upon my hand for days; and that night his face and voice were with me in my dreams.

The time came at last when I found it was of no avail to endeavour to exclude him from my thoughts. I might as well have tried to separate the daylight from the day. His looks, his gentle acts of tenderness and devotion, his low voice, all told me that he loved me. Once assured of this unspoken attachment, I gave my whole heart without reserve to the fascinations of first love.

From this time it seemed to me as if there

were a double life and beauty in every created thing. I drank in joy from every sight and sound. The spring flowers wore a brighter hue, and exhaled a sweeter perfume; the morning air breathed a thousand scents and sounds unknown before; the songs of the birds spoke a new language to my ears. I used to sit and dream for hours on the last words he had whispered, or the last pressure of his hand. I would close my eyes, and strive to recall every feature of his beloved face. Life was a dream—a happy, happy dream!

About this time, Herr Stolberg's manner altered to me. He was not less friendly, but he was more polite. There was constraint in his looks, in his manner, in the very tones of his voice. I asked myself what I had done to displease him; but could remember nothing. Once or twice I had fancied that he looked upon me with an expression almost of pity in his eyes; and one morning I could have believed that they were full of tears. I would

have given the world to say to him: "Friend, how have I angered you?" but his perfectly cool and polite manner would admit of no question.

The Grand Duke's birthday came round. A festival and concert were held at the palace in the evening. I was engaged with one or two others of the choir; and the pupils of the academy attended to sing the choruses. The concert-room opened upon the grounds by a beautiful marble terrace, and a broad flight of steps. Sitting on the platform, surrounded by instruments and singers, I turned my eyes often and wearily towards the garden beyond, and longed to escape amid its quiet alleys. A long cantata, composed by the Grand Duke, and listened to with courteous attention by his guests, constituted the musical entertainment of the evening. It was dull and uninteresting; and by the time the last notes of the royal composition had died away, I was thankful to retreat to an inner

room till the audience had dispersed. When all were gone to the ball-room, I wrapt a shawl about me, and stole out into the dark night.

It was autumn. The leaves were golden on the trees, and a warm odorous breeze filled the still night with beauty. The moon and stars shone brightly overhead; the air fanned my burning cheeks; and I took a shady turning amid the trees, and wandered slowly to and fro. That night the gardens were like a fairy scene. Lines of many-coloured lamps hung like fruit upon the branches of the acacias, which, cut in formal long alleys, seemed to stretch away into the dim distance. I went dreamily on; the strange calm and beauty of the place lulled me into a reverie, and I heard not the step that came behind me down the pathway.

"A lovely night," said the dearest voice in all the world, close at my side. "A night for poetry and love."

I felt the hot blood fly to my face and then

retreat again. I knew that I became very pale; but that he could not see my pallor. I trembled; but he should not know it.

"A lovely night, indeed, your excellency," I said, as firmly as I could.

He observed the tremor I struggled to conceal.

"You are ill, mademoiselle?"

"I thank your excellency. I am well."

"I have been seeking you, mademoiselle," he said in a low earnest voice—"I have been seeking you all through the palace and gardens; I wished to speak with you. I have looked forward to this night for many weeks in the hope of doing so."

He paused, but I remained quite silent. I could hear the throbbings of my own heart in the stillness; but he heard them not. He continued:—

"I would say three words, mademoiselle, that must long since have been written too plainly on my face—have mingled too audibly

with the tones of my voice—have spoken too visibly in my every action, to need a more distinct avowal. Yet here let me speak them —here, amid darkness and silence—here, amid the whispering trees, beneath the everlasting sky—here, before God and the stars! I risk my peace, my future, my happiness, my all, and say—I love you!"

Again he paused for a moment. He drew nearer to me; his voice, which had been soft and low, became quick and passionate.

"Alice, I have spoken—but not all. One question remains to be asked—my life hangs on your answer. Will you be my wife? . . . . Not a word?—not a token? Speak to me, dearest, speak!"

I could not speak; but his arm was round me, and his burning kisses were on my lips.

"Answer me—answer me!"

I withdrew myself from his arms; I took

his hand between both of mine, bowed down, and kissed it.

It was all my answer; but he interpreted it.

VI.

He was my sovereign—my king! My love for him was almost a religion. I feared sometimes that it was all a dream, and shuddered lest I should awake from it. My love became idolatry. He gave me his portrait, and I prayed with it in my hands. I would not have changed life then for paradise. I lived for him—him only. Did I forget my God in so worshipping His creature, and was I chastised for it?

It was soon known throughout the town that the Fräulein Hoffmann, who sang in the royal chapel, was betrothed to the young Baron Theodore von Bachhoffen, master of the horse to his Highness the Grand Duke. Madame Kloss was as proud and happy as though she had been my mother; the pupils brought me

flowers, gifts, and copies of verses; the masters offered me their formal congratulations. Herr Stolberg alone was silent. He seemed as if he neither saw nor heard anything of the event. When Madame Kloss, one morning, thinking that he must yet be in ignorance, told him in a half-audible voice of the betrothal of her dear Alice, he replied drily, that he was already aware of the circumstance, and turned away. I will not deny that I felt grieved and slighted; but I was too happy to be troubled long by this, or any other circumstance not bearing upon my love.

Thus it went on, and the winter time came back. He would be of age in the early spring, and our marriage was appointed for the day of his majority.

During this interval, I received one morning a short and formal note from Herr Stolberg, requesting leave to wait upon me immediately. He followed my permission in a few moments; and as he entered my little parlour,

I observed that he looked pale, and that he held a letter in his hand. I rose and placed a seat for him; but he muttered a few unintelligible words, placed the letter open before me, and began pacing nervously up and down the room.

It was written in French, and purported to be from one of his oldest friends, now the manager of the Italian Opera in Paris. He was in need of a first soprano—a prima donna—to commence the season till the arrival of Madame Malibran from London. Herr Stolberg had mentioned me in his letters; he felt that he could rely on his friend's judgment; he requested him to communicate with me; and he offered eight thousand francs for the season.

The characters swam before my eyes. I could scarce believe in such good fortune. I read the letter several times before I could speak a word.

"Does the Fräulein Hoffmann accept or

decline?" asked the chapel-master, stopping suddenly in his walk, and standing before me.

"I accept!—accept most gladly. That is, if . . . ."

The thought that Theodore might object to my appearance on the stage rushed suddenly over my mind. A strange feeling of reluctance to speak his name made me hesitate and blush.

Herr Stolberg made a movement with his hand for me to continue.

"I must have a day to consider," I said, falteringly.

"Yet a moment since you were decided!"

"True; but—but"—I felt it must be said, so turning partly aside—"I must consult other wishes than my own," I replied. "I must mention it to . . . ."

"To the Baron von Bachhoffen!" said the chapel-master in a low voice. "Oh, Fräulein Alice, if you believe in my friendship,

if you would requite it, do not mention this letter to the baron till after nine o'clock to-night. It is the first favour I have asked from you ; I implore you to grant it ! "

His voice was agitated, and his utterance rapid. I was frightened by his strange vehemence.

" Promise me, Fräulein—promise me !"

His look was so beseeching, and so earnest, that I said :—

" Well, I promise ; but only till after nine o'clock to-night."

" Be here in readiness to receive me," said the chapel-master in the same hurried tone ; but lower still, as if he feared to be overheard. " Be here at six or seven o'clock. I will then call upon you again. I must find you alone, and you must place yourself in my hands for a single hour. Speak no word of this or of the letter till the time promised. Be silent. Farewell !"

I bowed my head in assent. In an instant

he was gone. The day dragged heavily on, and every hour seemed longer than the last. It rained, and the rain was mingled with snow. At six I repaired to my own apartments, to receive him when he should arrive. I tried to read; but in vain. I could only pace the room; look out through the blurred windows on the dark wet gardens, and listen to the wind and rain. A sensation of vague terror crept over me; and when the town clocks chimed the hour, I listened to their harsh tongues as though they had been the tongues of fate.

Another dreary half hour crept away; I heard the bell rung, and the courtyard gate half opened—a familiar voice spoke my name—a quick foot trod on the stairs.

"I am late, Fräulein Alice," said the chapel-master, as he entered hastily and closed the door behind him; "and there is no time to be lost. You must go out with me for an hour."

He was pale—very pale. The snow and rain were trickling from his cloak upon the floor, and his black locks hung in wet masses upon his sallow cheeks.

I folded a heavy cloak about me, and drew a close bonnet and veil over my face.

"I am ready," I said.

We went down the stairs, and passed the the door of Madame Kloss's room.

"Shall I not tell madame?" I asked, as we went by.

He shook his head, hurried me on across the wet courtyard, and through the gates into the street. The porter stared inquisitively, and touched his hat as we passed by.

Although it was so early, none were stirring in the streets save a few soldiers and market-women. The churches looked dim and lofty, and the thick rain came steadily down. Through many dark by-ways and narrow turnings we went. The chapel-master walked fast, unheeding the pools of water that lay upon

the path. My feet were cold, and wet through. I thought of the night when I had so gone through the streets of London—a night as inclement as this. I almost fancied I was acting the same scene over again, and under the same circumstances, when we stopped before a low door, with a fantastically carved overhanging porch. The house was small; not a light was visible from any of the windows; three gloomy trees, stripped of their foliage, swung their branches mournfully before the door; and a dog began barking furiously within. Herr Stolberg tapped gently at the window; there was a sound of chains and bolts; the door opened slowly, and a female stood upon the threshold. She took me by the hand and led me along the passage, while Herr Stolberg, who seemed to know the way, followed softly behind. It was profoundly dark. She guided us to a room; and, saying that she would bring a light, went out and closed the door. I shook convulsively from head to foot.

"Fear nothing, Fräulein Alice," said my friend, taking my hand gently in his own—"Heavens! you are ill!"

"I am cold—nothing more," I replied faintly.

"Cold—cold and wet," he exclaimed in a suppressed and broken voice. "My God! You will be ill—ill and through me!"

"Hush!" I replied; "it is nothing. See, here comes the light."

A bright line of radiance streamed under the door. The woman entered with a lamp in her hand. It was Rebecca Leo! She placed her finger on her lips to stay the exclamation that was rising to mine, and, pressing my cold cheek to hers, whispered:—

"Hush! this is my father's house, Alice. Would that you had never crossed its threshold for this purpose! You must stand here, in the window. I will draw the curtains before you, and there you will hear all without the chance of discovery."

"What does this mean?" I cried. "What horrid secret am I to listen to? Let me go —let me go!"

"It is too late," said Rebecca, turning suddenly away and listening earnestly; "there is my father's ring at the door—hide, hide quickly! for my sake, Alice—for my sake!" —and she half led, half dragged me into the recess.

Herr Stolberg came and stood beside me, and Rebecca drew the heavy folds, so that they fell from ceiling to floor, and shrouded us from sight.

"Stay there; move not, breathe not," she said as she turned to go. "God help you, my poor Alice!"

The kiss she gave me covered my lips and cheek with tears. Rebecca weeping, and for me! I pressed my hands rigidly upon my breast, and waited, as if for death. My companion spoke no word, and for some minutes I heard only his breathing. Then came a sound as of

the opening and shutting of distant doors; a tread of feet along the hall; and the accents of a low querulous voice, as some persons entered the room in which we were concealed.

"More money! more money! always money!" said the voice, with an impatient sigh. There was a rustling of papers on the table, and a sound like turning the leaves of a book. "I cannot do it, excellency—I cannot do it. The estates will not bear another groschen. They are mortgaged to their full value, excellency. It cannot be."

"*Der Teufel*! I must have it, Leo," said another voice in reply.

Oh! that voice, that voice! Had I come hither for this! I shrunk back, and felt the paternal arm of my friend clasped round me in support.

"You must go to some one else, excellency, for your money," said the Jew. "I am a poor man, and I cannot *give*."

"Give! Did a Jew ever give?" said the other. "No, friend Leo, I ask no gifts—the gentleman does not beg from the money-lender. I must have further loans. I want a thousand florins."

Oh, the harsh, cold, mocking voice! How unlike the gentle tones I had been used to hear from those dear lips!

"A thousand florins, excellency!" cried the usurer. "Mein Gott! your estates are not worth a thousand kreutzers."

"I don't ask it on my estates; I offer better security."

"Security! good—good!" said the Jew, eagerly. "What security, excellency?"

"Listen, my very kind and respectable friend Isaac, and I will satisfy the delicate scruples of thy coffers, for conscience thou hast none. I am going to be married in the spring."

"I know it—I know it, and to a penniless singer, excellency."

"Precisely so, friend Isaac. To a penniless singer, who will be to me one of the greatest fortunes in Germany."

"Hein!" exclaimed the Jew, drawing a long breath between his teeth.

"Art thou aware, my friend, that this girl has the finest voice in Germany?—that she will create a madness, a *furor?*—that she will be worth, at the very least, a hundred thousand florins a year to *me*, her husband, and your debtor."

"And is this your security, excellency?"

"Truly it is. Can you wish a better."

"Bah! it is a folly. The girl may fail—may change her mind—may refuse you. I cannot lend my florins upon this phantom of a security."

"But I tell you she loves me, as only women love, friend Isaac. She would die for me. She is entirely mine. Your money is as safe as though it were in your own strong-boxes. Name your own rate of interest, and

take my bond at once. Money I must and will have. Without it, I cannot even marry suitably. Surely the stake is worth the risk? Come, Isaac—a thousand florins at two hundred per cent., payable in six months! Can you refuse?"

"A thousand florins! It is a great deal, excellency."

"I have not ten left to keep me from now till then. The cards and colours have been against me lately. It is fate. *Die Hölle*, Isaac, you must give it to me!"

"But you will be here again, excellency, before the week is past. The gaming-table will swallow every groschen. I dare not lend."

The answer was low and indistinct; the Jew seemed still to remonstrate, Theodore to asseverate and entreat. Then there was a rustling of more papers, the quick scratching of a pen, the ring of gold . . .

"Friend Isaac, thou art a treasure of a

money-lender," said the mocking voice. "A very demigod to a lover in distress. Cupid himself smiles on thee for this."

"You a lover, excellency!" said the Jew, with a short hard cough. "The lady of *your* affections must have charms indeed! I have heard of her from one who knows her, else I should hardly have trusted your story. She is pretty, I am told."

"I do not come here to talk of beauty and fair dames, friend Isaac," laughed the creditor, chinking some coins in his hand. "She is young, credulous, and clever—that is enough for our purpose. Pretty!—know'st thou the complexion of my mistress, Isaac?"

"Not, I, excellency."

"Red and black, friend Jew—*rouge et noir!* Good night! ha, ha! good night."

Their steps died away along the passage; doors shut and opened again; the room was left in darkness; and all was still. I did not weep; I did not speak; I did not die. My

hands were locked and cold; my lips were stony; my brain burned. I stood still—still and speechless. The world seemed crumbling away beneath my feet. Life—death—love! what were they all but words? I felt my hands grasped, and my brow kissed twice or thrice; I heard a faltering voice cry:—

"Alice, Alice, my friend, my sister, look up—speak—weep! Do not look thus—it terrifies me!"

I heard it; but it fell dully on my ear, and woke no echo in my soul. Then there came a light; a withdrawal of the curtains; a woman's gentle voice, that sobbed forth sweet, consoling words; a woman's gentle hands, that drew me to a sisterly embrace.

Then the deadly frost all suddenly gave way; I uttered a low moan, and fell in an agony of despair upon the floor.

How long I continued thus, or how I was

removed, I know not; but I suppose I must have fainted, for my next recollection is of a room in the academy, with Madame Kloss and Rebecca bathing my hands and brow, and Herr Stolberg bending earnestly above me. For some time I could not recall the dreadful past, but when I did, that memory was mercifully accompanied by tears. They were so good to me—so gentle! For hours and hours they never left my side, and it was nearly day-dawn before they thought me calm enough to be left alone. I felt as if all were night—past, present, future. Nothing around me, nothing before me but darkness; darkness unlighted by a single star.

And through all this there reigned one feverish desire which gained every moment in intensity—a restless longing to be far, far away—oh, not from my misery! but from the place where its cross was laid upon me. Away from the scenes of my youth and my false happiness! What was that youth now

to me?—what that brief sunshine? What was left me but to die?

I was sitting, fixed and tearless, as these thoughts formed themselves in my mind. My eyes fell upon the letter of the French manager. My resolution was taken in an instant.

"I will go," said I firmly.

I took pen and paper, and wrote to Herr Stolberg, acquainting him with my resolution; sent for Madame Kloss, and told her what I had done; and wrote a formal resignation of my appointment in the ducal chapel.

"When wilt thou go, my child?" asked Madame Kloss, tenderly.

"To-night, madame, when the diligence passes through the town."

VII.

Alone, alone upon the road! Night and

darkness around. No moon, no stars. Rain —driving, pitiless rain, streaming down the narrow windows of the coach, and dimming the pale light of the lamps outside. Not a sound save the wintry wind among the woods, the hoarse shouts of the postilions, the heavy wheels, and the monotonous trampling of the horses.

There was no passenger inside the diligence but myself; no friendly voice to breathe one comforting word to the weeping, desolate singer crouched in the corner. Herr Stolberg had seen me to the coach-office, and had ridden perhaps a mile with me on the road. But he had scarcely spoken to me all the time, and as he bade me farewell, and got out to walk back again in the dark, wet night, his voice was broken; and my hands, where he had kissed them, were wetted with his tears. True friend!—true, noble, and sincere! That voice might be harsh, but it was capable of framing tones

of gentlest consolation; that eye might be stern, but it could weep for pity. When I needed him not, he had been proud and cold to me; in the day of danger, he had rescued me; in the time of trouble, he had aided and comforted me.

It was a weary journey! I remember little of it, save a long succession of stages; the changes of day and night; the arrival and departure of many passengers; the toilsome motion; the heavy weight of unconquerable distress.

At last came the passing of frontiers, the transition from German to Dutch, from Dutch to French. Then a difference in the aspect of the country—towns, villages, rivers, hills, and forests; then a city with long narrow streets, and high white houses; soldiers, custom-house officers, the examination of passports and luggage. I was in Paris.

The hotel was immense, and my rooms overlooked a handsome street, thronged with vehicles, soldiers, and gaily dressed foot passengers. I was alone with my grief in the great city. The language was unfamiliar though not unknown to me; and my heart yearned again for the studious seclusion of my old home in Germany, and the sonorous sounds of my adopted tongue.

The manager of the Opera House, M. Lecroix, waited upon me the day after my arrival.

He was a Frenchman, but had been educated in Munich with his friend the chapel-master of Schwartzenfelden. He spoke German fluently. It was so pleasant to me to hear him utter it! He was grave, polite, even friendly. He did not remain long, for he could see that I was suffering; and, attributing my pallor to the fatigue of my long journey, withdrew very shortly, having first

arranged that I should attend the next day's rehearsal.

It went off favourably. The novelty and excitement of the scene revived my spirits for the while. I returned to my hotel, and applied myself to the study of my part. Thus a fortnight passed. We had daily rehearsals; my time and my mind were occupied; my old ambition was aroused; the heavy weight still lay upon my heart, but its sting was not so sharp. I could think of Theodore now with pity, and with less despair. I grew daily paler and thinner; but by degrees I found that I entered more immediately into the events and scenes around me. The night of performance was at length announced, and my name appeared in the bills and daily journals as the new prima donna. The opera was *Gustavus*.

When the day came, I was strangely excited; not with grief, not with terror, but with a kind of wild delight that was half

misery. I felt within myself a strong foreboding of success; I longed to win fame and riches, not for myself, ah, no! but that Theodore might hear of my triumph; might lament the heart he had lost; might blush for his own baseness! As the hour of performance neared, my emotion became almost uncontrollable. I seemed to tread upon air; my cheeks were flushed; my heart beat high; my pulse throbbed rapidly.

"Ah, mademoiselle, you will achieve a great success," said the manager, with a glance of delighted surprise as I entered the green-room to await my call. "You have the air of Jeanne d'Arc going forth to conquer."

I smiled at the compliment: I conversed with those around me. I was utterly unlike the silent singer who had passed through the rehearsals with such cold reserve and absent melancholy. I saw the others look from one to another with amazement, and then back again to me. I caught a glimpse of my face

in a mirror as I passed, and I scarcely recognized the glowing cheeks, the flashing eyes, the haughty carriage and triumphant lip for my own.

The first act passed away with moderate applause. Rubini, as Gustavus, was received cordially; but the audience remained quiet. The whole of this act is somewhat uninteresting. There was a pause; the second act commenced; and it was now my turn to appear as Amelia, the wife of the courtier Ankastrom, who seeks the abode of the prophetess in order to purchase from her a philter which may annihilate her unhappy attachment for Gustavus.

"Mademoiselle is called," said M. Lecroix.

I went on. I had no sooner appeared in the far gloom of the apartment, than a burst of applause shook the very air around me. I made the customary reverence. It wasrepeated again and again, in three distinct rounds. I trembled, but I did not fear. The footlights

blinded me. They seemed to interpose a curtain of light between the audience and myself. I could not see an inch beyond the stage. The stage!—it was the first time I had ever appeared there, yet I scarcely seemed to feel it strange. I breathed freely. I felt glad and strong; but I assumed the trembling tone and shrinking attitude of the high-born lady in the fortune-teller's hut. I implored her aid. My changing countenance depicted alternate terror, love, courage, despair. The prophetess declares that I must seek that dreadful spot beyond the city-walls where stands the scaffold, and there gather a certain mystic herb. I listen—I waver—I consent. The crowd rushes in, and I fly from the scene.

There was another burst of applause; but the chorus instantly began, and my share in that act was concluded.

Another brief pause, and the curtain rose again. It was a strangely solemn scene, and

marvellously painted: a desert heath near Stockholm. Two mossy columns, supporting a transverse bar of rusty iron, rise darkly in the midst of the stage. These answer the purpose of a gibbet, and the ghastly chains yet hang from them in which criminals are suspended.

I come slowly forward to seek, in that terrible solitude, the plant whose sovereign virtue is oblivion. The house is silent; and and in the opening recitative, the first notes of my voice, imploring courage from Heaven, seem to wander tremblingly round the space, and then to die away in terror. I advance, recede, advance again, and stoop to pluck the magic leaves. The distant clocks tell the hour of midnight. I cannot pluck the herb—I love! Yet, great Heaven, guide and strengthen me. I *will* gather it. I turn again, and see the king!

Then follows that highly-wrought scene of doubt and passion—the struggle of honour,

friendship, fidelity, and wildest love, on which the curtain falls!

Another long roar of approbation from the house. I am led forward; bouquets fall around me; the dazzling effect of the lights has worn away. I see a vast crowd of upturned faces, and many are in tears.

"Ah, Mademoiselle," says M. Lecroix, kissing my hand in a frenzy of delight, "I never knew so splendid a success!"

Then came a magnificent scene, representing the ball-room with its flowers, its myriads of variegated lamps, its vistas of gilded columns, and its crowds of dancers with their joyous voices, their rich costumes, and black velvet masks. All was confusion, splendour, intoxication. I advanced from one side; Gustavus from the other.

But the king was closely followed by a figure in a black domino. My eyes were suddenly riveted on this man. He held his plumed hat in his hand, and his light curling

hair contrasted strikingly with that sable vizor. A strange feeling came over me; my heart stood still; my breath failed me.

It was now my part to address Gustavus. The prompter gave the word; the stage waited for me; I compelled myself to advance. The stranger stepped suddenly to my side, and removed his mask.

"Alice!" he said, "I love you!—I cannot live without you! Were it to the ends of the earth, I must follow you!"

Oh! Heaven, that voice!—that voice again! I saw his pallid face, and wild bright eyes! The crowded stage, the glaring lights, the throng of faces in the theatre—all swam round before me. I uttered one piercing cry, and fell senseless to the ground.

VIII.

For many days after this event, my life remains a blank. The destruction of all my hopes, the rapid journey, the false excitement, and the shock I had received upon the stage, had been too much for my physical and mental strength. I was stricken down with fever and delirium.

After an interval that seemed to me as many months long as it was days, I woke one morning, as if from sleep. At first I had no recollection of what had passed. I fancied myself once more in Germany. I tried to rise; but found myself without the power to move!

I was alarmed. I looked round. The room was strange to me, and yet I had seen it before. A fire burned in the grate, and the blinds were drawn carefully down. I saw I had been ill. I closed my eyes; and suddenly it all came again before me—the theatre—the opera—the masked man with

the golden hair! Silent tears stole gently down my cheeks as I lay thinking.

By-and-by the door opened gently, and a woman entered. Her face was young and kind, and I tried to force a smile.

"I am better," I said in French. "Are you my nurse?"

"Ah! thank Heaven!" she cried, "madame is recovering! *Mais il ne faut pas parler!*" she continued earnestly, as she saw me about to speak. "It is forbidden by monsieur the doctor."

"At least tell me how long I have been ill," I said.

"Madame has been three weeks in danger. If madame will rest tranquil till monsieur the doctor has seen her, I will then talk to her as much as she pleases."

With this assurance I was forced to be content. Pierrette—for that was the name of my attendant—bathed my hands and face

with tender care, and then sat knitting quietly beside me. At last I fell asleep again, lulled by the monotonous motion of her busy fingers. I woke upon the entrance of the physician. He spoke softly; said that I was out of danger; and, promising to call upon the morrow, left me.

It was now evening. Pierette lighted a small lamp; drew the curtain before my eyes; recommenced her knitting, and began:—

"And now, if madame will promise not to speak or to excite herself, I will tell her all about her illness."

I promised; and she continued.

"*Eh bien!* Madame was taken ill upon the stage, after making a success altogether enormous. Madame fell, nobody knows why; and shrieked, nobody knows wherefore. She was ill—under the influence of fever—*voilà tout!* She was brought hither in a carriage,

and placed in bed. Madame was delirious—her ravings were terrible. This lasted three weeks, and madame's life was nearly despaired of. To-day, madame is saved, and her friend is happy!"

"Friend!—what friend?" I asked with eagerness.

"Silence, madame—not a word! Madame's friend, the gentleman who has called three or four times every day to inquire after her health. Ah, the poor monsieur! he tried, while madame was in danger, to seem firm and strong; but to-day, when he heard the happy news, he wept as if his heart would break for joy!"

I was dumb with surprise and happiness. Did he then truly love me, after all? Pierrette saw the expression of silent thankfulness upon my face.

"Ah! madame," she said archly, "my little history will do more good than the medicines of monsieur the doctor. But it is

not all. Madame will not blame me very much if I acknowledge that I have once suffered the gentleman to see madame during her illness? This poor monsieur, he prayed me so wildly for one glance at the face which we all believed he might never see again! And so I brought him to the threshold of madame's chamber, and entreated him to go no further; but he was not then to be controlled. He rushed forward and knelt beside the bed, and kissed her burning hands, and sobbed—ah! *c'était affreuse!* But madame must not weep: I will say no more if madame excites herself!"

Could I help weeping? Ah! blessed tears, how sweet and joyful were they! Theodore, my own Theodore! I had wronged him: he might be extravagant, thoughtless; but false . . . Thank Heaven! that grief was spared me, and I felt that all the rest was forgiven.

That night I slept long and dreamless-

ly. It was the sleep of health; and the next morning I felt much stronger. Days passed pleasantly away. Pierrette was attentive and affectionate. She told me of the visits of "that poor monsieur;" and constantly brought me flowers and books, which he left for me at the porter's lodge. It was winter-time; yet violets and exquisite camellias were laid every morning and evening upon my dressing-table.

I recovered very slowly, and three weeks elapsed before I could leave my bedroom. One day, Pierrette came, all smiles and mystery.

"There has been another gentleman this morning inquiring at the gate for news of madame. He trusts that madame will receive him *le plus tôt que possible!*"

"Can you describe this gentleman?" I asked.

"*Eh bien!* I did not see him; but Auguste told me that he was a fair, pale gentleman."

M. Lecroix was pale and fair; it was doubtless he.

"I shall be well enough to-morrow, Pierrette," was my reply. "Leave word with the concierge, that I shall be happy to receive the gentleman at two o'clock in the day."

So it was the manager, wishing me, of course, to resume my engagement. I was sorry to be the cause of so much confusion and loss, and I was eager to begin work as soon as possible.

I could not resist the impulse that came upon me to try my voice once more. I sat down to the piano, and played the opening symphony of a little German song that *he* had often loved to listen to. I tried to sing. Was it weakness? Was it emotion? Not a note came! Again I tried—again—again!

Alas! it must be so! My voice, my glorious, my beautiful voice was utterly,

utterly gone! My head dropped upon my hands, and I sobbed aloud.

It was a great sorrow; but I still had Theodore. That night I prayed for strength and comfort, and felt that what I had lost was more than compensated to me in his love.

"I have been deprived of it but a little sooner," I argued with myself. "Age must have brought this calamity, though more slowly. It is but a few years less—a feverish dream of fame from which I have awakened ere it reached the end. God is just and wise —His will be done!"

In the morning I felt calm; almost cheerful.

"Auguste tells me, madame," said Pierrette, "that the fair gentleman has called again, and when he heard your message, said that he should kiss your hands punctually at the time appointed."

"And the other gentleman?" I asked, for

there had been no bouquet for the last two mornings.

"The other monsieur has not called, madame, for two days. When he came last, Auguste told him that madame was greatly better, and would soon receive; but monsieur only sighed, and turned away hastily. He has not called since."

"And he has never left either card or message?"

"Never, madame."

This delicacy touched me more nearly than all his devotion. Poor Theodore! he feared to intrude his love, or even his repentance, upon me!

Two o'clock came.

I almost dreaded the visit of M. Lecroix. I shrunk from telling him that my career was closed; that I had no voice to sing for him!

Pierrette came hastily in:—

"He is here, madame—the fair monsieur

who called yesterday! I see him in the courtyard."

I rose to receive him. Pierrette opened the door of the ante-chamber, and admitted—THEODORE!

He flew to me—he covered my hands with kisses—he knelt to me—he clasped me in his arms—he breathed his passionate protestations on my lips!

For some time I was dumb. Surprise and disappointment overwhelmed me. Not disappointment at the sight of that still beloved face; but bitter disappointment that his had not been the anxiety, the haunting visits, the eager inquiries, the tears shed at my bedside when I was near to die! Who, then, had been that one whose life seemed to hang upon mine?

"Alas!" I said bitterly, "then it was not thou!"

He asked my meaning, and I told him all. He had for some moments no reply to give.

At last he stammered a few vague excuses. He also had been ill—his fortunes were embarrassed, and he had been occupied in law matters—he had repeatedly inquired for me; but, doubtless, the porter had omitted to name his visits.

I looked steadily at him. In that look the truth became plain to my eyes, and the love passed away from my heart. I doubted him; and mistrust cannot dwell with love. I resolved to put his protestations to the proof.

"And do you still love me, Theodore?" I said.

"Heaven is my witness," he exclaimed, "that you are dearer to me at this moment than you ever were before!"

"And you love me for myself and my heart only?"

"For thyself, for thy gentleness, for thy woman's heart!"

"And if I were poor—poor of my only ad-

vantages? If I had even no voice to recommend me—no voice wherewith to earn riches for my husband?"

"Then wouldst thou be dearer still, my own love! Dearer in thy privation—dearer if dependent solely on my arm."

"It is well, Theodore," I said very calmly, fixing the same unwavering glance upon him; "for such indeed is my condition. The fever has dealt hardly with me. I have lost my voice!"

He was once more kneeling at my feet; but when I said these words, he rose, and turned deadly pale. He could not believe me. He looked at me; yet I seemed grave, and in earnest. He tried to force a smile.

"You are jesting with me, my love!"

"Indeed, no," I replied; "my voice is irrevocably gone. I shall never sing again."

He dropped into a chair. The very power of dissimulation seemed to leave him. His cheeks and lips became livid. I could almost

have pitied his dismay, but for the scorn with which his baseness inspired me.

"I fear," said I, haughtily, "that your excellency is disappointed."

He started, rose, pressed his hand to his forehead, pleaded a sudden illness, and begged permission to retire. He advanced as if to embrace me. I drew back with undisguised contempt; but he seized my hand, touched it with his lips—and they were icy cold—bowed profoundly, and hastened from the room.

Traitor that he was! I felt too much indignation to be moved either by grief or compassion. My pride was wounded, but my heart untouched. I sat down and wrote instantly to M. Lecroix. My letter was brief and decisive. I told him all—how my voice was gone, and my theatrical career consequently ended. I expressed my regret for his disappointment, and announced my intention of speedily quitting Paris.

I rang for Pierrette, despatched my letter to the manager, and then, turning to her—

"Pierrette," I said, "I wish to go into the country for a few months. Will you accompany me?"

"To the country, madame? At this time of the year? Ah, the country in February is so *triste!*"

"Not to me. I have been used to love it at all seasons. Will you go with me, Pierrette?"

"I will go with you, *ma chère dame*—with you anywhere!"

So I consulted her about the locality, and she named many in the neighbourhood of Paris—Ville d'Avray, Asnières, Argenteuil, St. Germains; but it ended in my leaving the choice to herself. I then arranged that she should go out the next day and seek some retreat for me.

Evening came. I sat beside the fire, and

formed a plan for my future life. I resolved to spend some months in the country till my health was thoroughly restored, and then to seek the situation of governess in some French or English family.

"A letter for madame," said Pierrette, entering and disturbing my reverie.

I recognised Theodore's well-known hand; but the time when my heart used to beat at the sight of it, was now gone by for ever. I wondered if it would be like his former letters; but no—this epistle was couched in a different strain. He regretted my loss and his own poverty: he had no desire to drag me down to want; he felt that the most generous part would be to resign me. I was free—he was for ever unhappy. He wished me all forgetfulness of my devoted servant, Theodore von Bachhoffen.

Generous indeed! And so this was the end—the end of that golden dream of truth and love! One tear fell on the paper: it was the last lingering weakness of my heart. I

crushed the letter, and cast it into the flames. It blazed and writhed, turned to a black film lighter than the very air, and fell away in dust. I looked up, and saw Pierrette still standing there. There was a curious meaning in her face.

"You are waiting to say something to me?" I asked.

"No—yes; that is—I have heard of a residence for madame."

"Indeed!" I said. "Where is it, Pierrette?"

"At Bellevue, madame, near Sèvres. I have a cousin there who owns a house in a charming situation—and—and it is at madame's service for as many months as she may please to reside there."

"This is indeed delightful, Pierrette," I said, smiling. "When may we go there?"

"To-morrow, if madame pleases; or the next day."

So I named the next day, thinking I should then be stronger for the journey.

During the time that intervened, Pierrette was in a state of uncontrollable excitement. She laughed, danced, chattered, and was beside herself with joy. She seemed frequently on the point of saying something, and as often checked herself. When I questioned her, she parried my inquiries by saying that she had prepared a little surprise for me at Bellevue—but she would not tell—no, not for the world!

The morning came at length. I had thought much of this "poor monsieur" of whom Pierrette had told me; but since I had received that letter from the baron, she remained unaccountably silent about him. Before we left the hotel, I gave her a card with my address at Bellevue written upon it, and desired her to leave it with the concierge in case he should call; for I had a haunting desire to see and know this man.

"And so he never came again, Pierrette?" I said as I gave it to her.

"Oh! no, madame—no."

"Can you not describe his appearance, his complexion, his height?"

"I, madame? *Ah ciel!* not I! I do not observe gentlemen."

So it was of no avail; and as we drove away, I sighed to think that I might never know him.

I was still weak, and the sight of the crowded streets, the glittering shops, the thronging vehicles, distressed and fluttered me. I leaned back in the corner, and closed my eyes. When I again opened them, we were passing along a country road bordered by barren fields and leafless trees. The air was fresh and clear, and there was a look of awakening spring in everything around. I felt a great peace and resignation steal upon me; and, though I was very silent, I felt less unhappy. We passed many pretty country-houses, and a thick wood, green with wintry firs. We then entered a lane arched in with trees—

a lane that must have been a perfect bower in the summer season. The coach stopped suddenly before an exquisite little country-house, all overgrown with dark glossy ivy, and fenced in by gigantic shrubs. Here we alighted. Pierrette gave me her arm, and led me through the house—all was new, tasteful, and complete.

"Is madame content?" asked Pierrette smiling.

Content! It was but too charming; and the rent I feared . . . . But Pierrette laughed, and shook her head.

"Would not madame now wish to walk through the garden?"

So we went out by the windows of the salon, and down a flight of stone steps to the grassy lawn. Even at this season, the place looked beautiful. The tiny crocuses and snowdrops were just blossoming above the mould; the laurel, the fir, the laurustina with its pink clustering blossoms, and the thick ivy, lent a

green like spring-time. There was a summer-house at the end, with a tiny fountain in front.

"Madame must rest in the summer-house for a few moments," said Pierrette, as she made me take a seat.

What was there in so simple a thing as a bouquet of camellias to make me start and tremble as I did, to see it lying there upon the little rustic table?

I rose, half terrified, as if to go—there was a footstep on the gravel-walk—Pierrette clapped her hands, and ran away.

"Pierrette! Pierrette!" I cried, and was about to follow, when a tall form interposed, and a gentle hand took mine. I did not look upon his face; but my heart told me who it was. Blind as I had been before, I knew all now!

"Alice! Alice!" said Herr Stolberg as he led me back to the arbour and stood before me—"I love you!"

I made no reply, and he went on.

"Alice! I have loved you for the last ten years—ever since you were a little child. When you were a child, I was a man; I have now reached middle life, and you are in the bloom of youth. Can you love me?"

I was silent, but the tears slowly filled my eyes and dropped upon my cheeks.

"I have never left you, Alice," he said in the same low tone, "since that night when you departed in sorrow from your German home. On the roof of the same coach, I travelled with, and protected you. In Paris, I have watched over you; and when death threatened to remove you from my care, I was ready also to die!"

I looked up into his dark eyes, and, standing there in his noble truth and generous love, to me he seemed almost beautiful.

"I have prepared this summer-home for you. Be my wife, Alice, and let us share it together! When the autumn comes, we will

go back to Germany, and to our art."

I smiled sadly through my tears.

"But I have no voice," I said softly.

"I know it; still thou hast voice enough to say: 'I love thee'—and that is all the melody my heart asks from thine."

And so, reader, I said it.

The words were spoken fifteen years ago, and I have not repented of them yet.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NORTH MAIL.

THE circumstances I am about to relate to you have truth to recommend them. They happened to myself, and my recollection of them is as vivid as if they had taken place only yesterday. Twenty years, however, have gone by since that night. During those twenty years I have told the story to but one other person. I tell it now with a reluctance which I find it difficult to overcome. All I entreat, meanwhile, is that you will abstain from forcing your own conclusions upon me. I want nothing explained away. I desire no arguments. My mind on this subject is quite

made up; and, having the testimony of my own senses to rely upon, I prefer to abide by it.

Well! It was just twenty years ago, and within a day or two of the end of the grouse season. I had been out all day with my gun, and had had no sport to speak of. The wind was due east; the month, December; the place, a bleak wide moor in the far north of England. And I had lost my way. It was not a pleasant place in which to lose one's way, with the first feathery flakes of a coming snow-storm just fluttering down upon the heather, and the leaden evening closing in all around. I shaded my eyes with my hand, and stared anxiously into the gathering darkness, where the purple moorland melted into a range of low hills, some ten or twelve miles distant. Not the faintest smoke-wreath, not the tiniest cultivated patch, or fence, or sheep-track, met my eyes in any direction. There was nothing for it but to walk on, and take

my chance of finding what shelter I could, by the way. So I shouldered my gun again, and pushed wearily forward; for I had been on foot since an hour after daybreak, and had eaten nothing since breakfast.

Meanwhile, the snow began to come down with ominous steadiness, and the wind fell. After this, the cold grew more intense, and the night came rapidly up. As for me, my prospects darkened with the darkening sky, and my heart grew heavy as I thought how my young wife was already watching for me through the window of our little inn parlour, and imagined all the suffering in store for her throughout this weary night. We had been married four months, and, having spent our autumn in the Highlands, were now lodging in a remote little village situated just on the verge of the great English moorlands. We were very much in love, and, of course, very happy. This morning, when we parted, she had implored me to return before

dusk, and I had promised her that I would. What would I not have given to keep my word!

Even now, weary as I was, I felt that with a supper, an hour's rest, and a guide, I might still get back to her before midnight, if only guide and shelter could be found.

And all this time the snow fell, and the night thickened. I stopped and shouted every now and then, but my shouts seemed only to make the silence deeper. Then a vague sense of uneasiness came upon me, and I began to remember stories of travellers who had walked on and on in the falling snow until, wearied out, they were fain to lie down and sleep their lives away. Would it be possible, I asked myself, to keep on thus through all the long dark night? Would there not come a time when my limbs must fail, and my resolution give way? When I, too, must sleep the sleep of death. Death! I shuddered. How hard to die just now,

when life lay all so bright before me! How hard for my darling, whose whole loving heart . . . . but that thought was not to be borne! To banish it, I shouted again, louder and longer, and then listened eagerly. Was my shout answered, or did I only fancy that I heard a far-off cry? I halloed again, and again the echo followed. Then a wavering speck of light came suddenly out of the dark, shifting, disappearing, growing momentarily nearer and brighter. Running towards it at full speed, I found myself, to my great joy, face to face with an old man and a lantern.

"Thank God!" was the exclamation that burst involuntarily from my lips.

Blinking and frowning, he lifted the lantern and peered into my face.

"What for?" growled he, sulkily.

"Well—for you. I began to fear I should be lost in the snow."

"Eh, then, folks do get cast away here-

abouts fra' time to time, an' what's to hinder you from bein' cast away likewise, if the Lord's so minded?"

"If the Lord is so minded that you and I shall be lost together, friend, we must submit," I replied; "but I don't mean to be lost without you. How far am I now from Dwolding?"

"A gude twenty mile, more or less."

"And the nearest village?"

"The nearest village is Wyke, an' that's twelve mile t'other side."

"Where do you live, then?"

"Out yonder," said he, with a vague jerk of the lantern.

"You're going home, I presume?"

"Maybe I am."

"Then I'm going with you."

The old man shook his head, and rubbed his nose reflectively with the handle of the lantern.

"It ain't o' no use," growled he. "He 'ont let you in—not he."

"We'll see about that," I replied, briskly. "Who is He?"

"The master."

"Who is the master?"

"That's now't to you," was the unceremonious reply.

"Well, well; you lead the way, and I'll engage that the master shall give me shelter and a supper to-night."

"Eh, you can try him!" muttered my reluctant guide; and, still shaking his head, he hobbled, gnome-like, away through the falling snow.

A large mass loomed up presently out of the darkness, and a huge dog rushed out barking furiously.

"Is this the house?" I asked.

"Ay, it's the house. Down, Bey!" And he fumbled in his pocket for the key.

I drew up close behind him, prepared to lose no chance of entrance, and saw in the little circle of light shed by the lantern that

the door was heavily studded with iron nails, like the door of a prison. In another minute he had turned the key, and I had pushed past him into the house.

Once inside, I looked round with curiosity, and found myself in a great raftered hall, which served, apparently, a variety of uses. One end was piled to the roof with corn, like a barn. The other was stored with flour-sacks, agricultural implements, casks, and all kinds of miscellaneous lumber; while from the beams overhead hung rows of hams, flitches, and bunches of dried herbs for winter use. In the centre of the floor stood some huge object gauntly dressed in a dingy wrapping-cloth, and reaching halfway to the rafters. Lifting a corner of this cloth, I saw, to my surprise, a telescope of very considerable size, mounted on a rude moveable platform with four small wheels. The tube was made of painted wood, bound round with bands of metal rudely fashioned; the speculum, so far as I could

estimate its size by the dim light, measured at least fifteen inches in diameter. While I was yet examining the instrument, and asking myself whether it was not the work of some self-taught optician, a bell rang sharply.

"That's for you," said my guide, with a malicious grin. "Yonder's his room."

He pointed to a low black door at the opposite side of the hall. I crossed over, rapped somewhat loudly, and went in, without waiting for an invitation. A huge, white-haired old man rose from a table covered with books and papers, and confronted me sternly.

"Who are you?" said he. "How came you here? What do you want?"

"James Murray, barrister-at-law. On foot across the moor. Meat, drink, and sleep."

He bent his bushy brows in a portentous frown.

"Mine is not a house of entertainment,"

he said, haughtily. "Jacob, how dared you admit this stranger?"

"I didn't admit him," grumbled the old man. "He followed me over the muir, and shouldered his way in before me. I'm no match for six foot two."

"And pray, sir, by what right have you forced an entrance into my house?"

"The same by which I should have clung to your boat, if I were drowning. The right of self-preservation."

"Self-preservation?"

"There's an inch of snow on the ground already," I replied briefly; "and it will be deep enough to cover my body before day-break."

He strode to the window, pulled aside a heavy black curtain, and looked out.

"It is true," he said. "You can stay, if you choose, till morning. Jacob, serve the supper."

With this he waved me to a seat, resumed

his own, and became at once absorbed in the studies at which I had disturbed him.

I placed my gun in a corner, drew a chair to the hearth, and examined my quarters at leisure. Smaller and less incongruous in its arrangements than the hall, this room contained, nevertheless, much to awaken my curiosity. The floor was carpetless. The whitewashed walls were in parts scrawled over with strange diagrams, and in others covered with shelves crowded with philosophical instruments, the uses of many of which were unknown to me. On one side of the fireplace stood a bookcase filled with dingy folios; on the other, a small organ, fantastically decorated with painted carvings of mediæval saints and devils. Through the half-opened door of a cupboard at the further end of the room, I saw a long array of geological specimens, surgical preparations, crucibles, retorts, and jars of chemicals; while on the mantelshelf beside me, amid a number of small objects, stood a

model of the solar system, a small galvanic battery, and a microscope. Every chair had its burden. Every corner was heaped high with books. The very floor was littered over with maps, casts, papers, tracings, and learned lumber of all conceivable kinds.

I stared about me with an amazement increased by every fresh object upon which my eyes chanced to rest. So strange a room I had never seen; yet seemed it stranger still to find such a room in a lone farmhouse, amid these wild and solitary moors! Over and over again, I looked from my host to his surroundings, and from his surroundings back to my host, asking myself who and what he could be? His head was singularly fine; but it was more the head of a poet than a philosopher. Broad in the temples, prominent over the eyes, and clothed with a rough profusion of perfectly white hair, it had all the ideality and much of the ruggedness that characterises the head of Louis von Beethoven. There

were the same deep lines about the mouth, and the same stern furrows in the brow. There was the same concentration of expression. While I was yet observing him, the door opened, and Jacob brought in the supper. His master then closed his book, rose, and with more courtesy of manner than he had yet shown, invited me to the table.

A dish of ham and eggs, a loaf of brown bread, and a bottle of admirable sherry, were placed before me.

"I have but the homeliest farmhouse fare to offer you, sir," said my entertainer. "Your appetite, I trust, will make up for the deficiencies of our larder."

I had already fallen upon the viands, and now protested, with the enthusiasm of a starving sportsman, that I had never eaten anything so delicious.

He bowed stiffly, and sat down to his own supper, which consisted, primitively, of a jug of milk and a basin of porridge. We ate in

silence, and, when we had done, Jacob removed the tray. I then drew my chair back to the fireside. My host, somewhat to my surprise, did the same, and turning abruptly towards me said :—

"Sir, I have lived here in strict retirement for three-and-twenty years. During that time, I have not seen as many strange faces, and I have not read a single newspaper. You are the first stranger who has crossed my threshold for more than four years. Will you favour me with a few words of information respecting that outer world from which I have parted company so long?"

"Pray interrogate me," I replied. "I am heartily at your service."

He bent his head in acknowledgment; leaned forward, with his elbows resting on his knees, and his chin supported in the palms of his hands; stared fixedly into the fire, and proceeded to question me.

His inquiries related chiefly to scientific

matters, with the later progress of which, as applied to the practical purposes of life, he was almost wholly unacquainted. No student of science myself, I replied as well as my slight information permitted; but the task was far from easy, and I was much relieved when, passing from interrogation to discussion, he began pouring forth his own conclusions upon the facts which I had been attempting to place before him. He talked, and I listened spell-bound. He talked till I believe he almost forgot my presence, and only thought aloud. I had hever heard anything like it then; I have never heard anything like it since. Familiar with all systems of all philosophies, subtle in analysis, bold in generalisation, he poured forth his thoughts in an uninterrupted stream, and, still leaning forward in the same moody attitude with his eyes fixed upon the fire, wandered from topic to topic, from speculation to speculation, like an inspired dreamer. From practical science to mental philosophy;

from electricity in the wire to electricity in the nerve; from Watts to Mesmer, from Mesmer to Reichenbach, from Reichenbach to Swedenborg, Spinoza, Condillac, Descartes, Berkeley, Aristotle, Plato, and the Magi and Mystics of the East, were transitions which, however bewildering in their variety and scope, seemed easy and harmonious upon his lips as sequences in music. By-and-by—I forget now by what link of conjecture or illustration—he passed on to that field which lies beyond the boundary line of even conjectural philosophy, and reaches no man knows whither. He spoke of the soul and its aspirations; of the spirit and its powers; of second sight; of prophecy; of those phenomena which, under the names of ghosts, spectres, and supernatural appearances, have been denied by the sceptics and attested by the credulous, of all ages.

"The world," he said, "grows hourly more and more sceptical of all that lies beyond its own narrow radius; and our men of science

foster the fatal tendency. They condemn as fable all that resists experiment. They reject as false all that cannot be brought to the test of the laboratory or the dissecting-room. Against what superstition have they waged so long and obstinate a war, as against the belief in apparitions? And yet what superstition has maintained its hold upon the minds of men so long and so firmly? Show me any fact in physics, in history, in archæology, which is supported by testimony so wide and so various. Attested by all races of men, in all ages, and in all climates, by the soberest sages of antiquity, by the rudest savages of to-day, by the Christian, the Pagan, the Pantheist, the Materialist, this phenomenon is treated as a nursery tale by the philosophers of our century. Circumstantial evidence weighs with them as a feather in the balance. The comparison of causes with effects, however valuable in physical science, is put aside as worthless and unreliable. The evidence of

competent witnesses, however conclusive in a court of justice, counts for nothing. He who pauses before he pronounces, is condemned as a trifler. He who believes, is a dreamer or a fool."

He spoke with bitterness, and, having said thus, relapsed for some minutes into silence. Presently he raised his head from his hands, and added, with an altered voice and manner—

"I, sir, paused, investigated, believed, and was not ashamed to state my convictions to the world. I, too, was branded as a visionary, held up to ridicule by my contemporaries, and hooted from that field of science in which I had laboured with honour during all the best years of my life. These things happened just three-and-twenty years ago. Since then, I have lived as you see me living now, and the world has forgotten me, as I have forgotten the world. You have my history."

"It is a very sad one," I murmured, scarcely knowing what to answer.

"It is a very common one," he replied. "I have only suffered for the truth, as many a better and wiser man has suffered before me."

He rose, as if desirous of ending the conversation, and went over to the window.

"It has ceased snowing," he observed, as he dropped the curtain, and came back to the fireside.

"Ceased!" I exclaimed, starting eagerly to my feet. "Oh, if it were only possible—but no! it is hopeless. Even if I could find my way across the moor, I could not walk twenty miles to-night."

"Walk twenty miles to-night!" repeated my host. "What are you thinking of?"

"Of my wife," I replied, impatiently. "Of my young wife, who does not know that I have lost my way, and who is at this moment breaking her heart with suspense and terror."

"Where is she?"

"At Dwolding, twenty miles away."

"At Dwolding;" he echoed, thoughtfully. "Yes, the distance, it is true, is twenty miles; but—are you so anxious to save the next six or eight hours?"

"So anxious, that I would give ten guineas at this moment for a guide and a horse."

"Your wish can be gratified at a less costly rate," said he, smiling. "The night mail from the north, which changes horses at Dwolding, passes within five miles of this spot, and will be due at a certain cross-road in about an hour and a quarter. If Jacob were to go with you across the moor, and put you into the old coach road, you could find your way, I suppose, to where it joins the new one?"

"Easily—gladly."

He smiled again, rang the bell, gave the old servant his directions, and, taking a bottle of whisky and a wine-glass from the

cupboard in which he kept his chemicals, said—

"The snow lies deep, and it will be difficult walking to-night on the moor. A glass of usquebaugh before you start."

I would have declined the spirit, but he pressed it on me, and I drank it. It went down my throat like liquid flame, and almost took my breath away.

"It is strong," he said; "but it will help to keep out the cold. And now you have no moments to spare. Good night!"

I thanked him for his hospitality, and would have shaken hands, but that he had turned away before I could finish my sentence. In another minute I had traversed the hall, Jacob had locked the outer door behind me, and we were out on the wide white moor.

Although the wind had fallen, it was still bitterly cold. Not a star glimmered in the black vault overhead. Not a sound, save the

rapid crunching of the snow beneath our feet, disturbed the heavy stillness of the night. Jacob, not too well pleased with his mission, shambled on before in sullen silence, his lantern in his hand, and his shadow at his feet. I followed, with my gun over my shoulder, as little inclined for conversation as himself. My thoughts were full of my late host. His voice yet rang in my ears. His eloquence yet held my imagination captive. I remember to this day, with surprise, how my over-excited brain retained whole sentences and parts of sentences, troops of brilliant images, and fragments of splendid reasoning, in the very words in which he had uttered them. Musing thus over what I had heard, and striving to recal a lost link here and there, I strode on at the heels of my guide, absorbed and unobservant. Presently—at the end, as it seemed to me, of only a few minutes—he came to a sudden halt, and said:

"Yon's your road. Keep the stone fence to

your right hand, and you can't fail of the way."

"This, then, is the old coach-road?"

"Ay, 'tis the old coach-road."

"And how far do I go, before I reach the cross-roads?"

"Nigh upon three miles."

I pulled out my purse, and he became more communicative.

"The road's a fair road enough," said he, "for foot passengers; but 'twas over steep and narrow for the northern traffic. You'll mind where the parapet's broken away, close again the sign-post. It's never been mended since the accident."

"What accident?"

"Eh, the night mail pitched right over into the valley below—a gude sixty feet an' more—just at the worst bit o' road in the whole county."

"Horrible! Were many lives lost?"

"All. Four were found dead, and t'other two died next morning."

"How long is it since this happened?"

"Just nine year."

"Near the sign-post, you say? I will bear it in mind. Good night."

"Gude night, sir, and thankee."

Jacob pocketed his half-crown, made a faint pretence of touching his hat, and trudged back by the way he had come.

I watched the light of his lantern till it quite disappeared, and then turned to pursue my way alone. This was no longer a matter of the slightest difficulty, for, despite the dead darkness overhead, the line of stone fence showed distinctly enough against the pale gleam of the snow. How silent it seemed now, with only my own footsteps to listen to; how silent and how solitary! A strange disagreeable sense of loneliness stole over me. I walked faster. I hummed a fragment of a tune. I cast up enormous sums in my head, and accumulated them at compound interest. I did my best, in short, to forget the startling speculations to

which I had but just been listening, and, to some extent, I succeeded.

Meanwhile the night air seemed to become colder and colder, and though I walked fast, I found it impossible to keep myself warm. My feet were like ice. I lost sensation in my hands, and grasped my gun mechanically. I even breathed with difficulty, as though, instead of traversing a quiet north country highway, I were scaling the uppermost heights of some gigantic Alp. This last symptom became presently so distressing, that I was forced to stop for a few minutes, and lean against the stone fence. As I did so, I chanced to look back up the road, and there, to my infinite relief, I saw a distant point of light, like the gleam of an approaching lantern. I at first concluded that Jacob had retraced his steps and followed me; but even as the conjecture presented itself, a second light flashed into sight—a light evidently parallel with the first, and approaching at the

same rate of motion. It needed no second thought to show me that these must be the carriage-lamps of some private vehicle; though it seemed strange that any private vehicle should take a road professedly disused and dangerous.

There could be no doubt, however, of the fact, for the lamps grew larger and brighter every moment, and I even fancied I could already see the dark outline of the carriage between them. It was coming up very fast, and quite noiselessly; the snow being nearly a foot deep under the wheels.

And now the body of the vehicle became distinctly visible behind the lamps. It looked strangely lofty. A sudden suspicion flashed upon me. Was it possible that I had passed the cross roads in the dark without observing the sign-post, and could this be the very coach which I had come to meet?

No need to ask myself that question a second time, for here it came round the bend

of the road, guard and driver, one outside passenger, and four steaming greys, all wrapped in a soft haze of light, through which the lamps blazed out like a pair of fiery meteors.

I jumped forward, waved my hat, and shouted. The mail came down at full speed, and passed me. For a moment I feared that I had not been seen or heard, but it was only for a moment. The coachman pulled up ; the guard, muffled to the eyes in capes and comforters, and apparently sound asleep in the rumble, neither answered my hail nor made the slightest effort to dismount; the outside passenger did not even turn his head. I opened the door for myself, and looked in. There were but three travellers inside, so I stepped in, shut the door, slipped into the vacant corner, and congratulated myself on my good fortune.

The atmosphere of the coach seemed, if possible, colder than that of the outer air, and

was pervaded by a singularly damp and disagreeable smell. I looked round at my fellow passengers. They were all three men ; and all silent. They did not seem to be asleep, but each leaned back in his corner of the vehicle, as if absorbed in his own reflections. I attempted to open a conversation.

"How intensely cold it is to-night," I said, addressing my opposite neighbour.

He lifted his head, looked at me, but made no reply.

"The winter," I added, "seems to have begun in earnest."

Although the corner in which he sat was so dim that I could distinguish none of his features very clearly, I saw that his eyes were still turned full upon me. And yet he answered never a word.

At any other time I should have felt, and perhaps expressed, some annoyance ; but at that moment I felt too ill to do either. The icy coldness of the night air had struck a chill

to my very marrow, and the strange smell inside the coach was affecting me with an intolerable nausea. I shivered from head to foot, and, turning to my left-hand neighbour, asked if he had any objection to an open window.

He neither spoke nor stirred.

I repeated the question somewhat more loudly, but with the same result. Then I lost patience, and let the sash down. As I did so, the leather strap broke in my hand, and I observed that the glass was covered with a thick coat of mildew, the accumulation, apparently, of years. My attention being thus drawn to the condition of the coach, I examined it more narrowly, and saw by the uncertain light of the outer lamps that it was in the last state of dilapidation. Every part of it was not only out of repair, but in a state of actual decay. The sashes splintered at a touch. The leather fittings were crusted over with mould, and literally rotting from the woodwork. The

floor was almost breaking away beneath my feet. The whole machine, in short, was foul with damp, and had evidently been dragged from some outhouse in which it had been mouldering away for years, to do another day or two of duty on the road.

I turned to the third passenger, whom I had not yet addressed, and hazarded one more remark.

"This coach," I said, "is in a deplorable condition. The regular mail, I suppose, is under repair?"

He moved his head slowly, and looked me in the face, without speaking a word. I shall never forget that look while I live. I turned cold at heart under it. I turn cold at heart even now when I recal it. His eyes glowed with a fiery unnatural lustre. His face was livid as the face of a corpse. His bloodless lips were drawn back as if in the agony of death, and showed the gleaming teeth between.

The words that I was about to utter died upon my lips, and a strange horror came upon me. My sight had by this time become used to the gloom of the coach, and I could see with tolerable distinctness. I turned to my opposite neighbour. He, too, was looking at me, with the same startling pallor in his face, and the same stony glitter in his eyes. I passed my hand across my brow. I turned to the passenger on the seat beside my own, and saw—oh Heaven! how shall I describe what I saw? I saw that he was no living man—that none of them were living men, like myself! A pale phosphorescent light—the light of putrefaction—played upon their awful faces; upon their hair, dank with the dews of the grave; upon their clothes, earth-stained and dropping to pieces; upon their hands, which were as the hands of corpses long buried. Only their eyes, their terrible eyes, were living; and those eyes were all turned menacingly upon me!

A shriek of terror, a wild unintelligible cry for help and mercy, burst from my lips as I flung myself against the door, and strove in vain to open it.

In that single instant, brief and vivid as a landscape beheld in the flash of summer lightning, I saw the moon shining down through a rift of stormy cloud—the ghastly sign-post rearing its warning finger by the wayside—the broken parapet—the plunging horses—the black gulf below. Then the coach reeled like a ship at sea. Then came a mighty crash—a sense of crushing pain—and then, darkness.

It seemed as if years had gone by, when I awoke one morning from a deep sleep, and found my wife watching by my bedside. I will pass over the scene that ensued, and give you, in half a dozen words, the tale she told me with tears of thanksgiving. I had fallen over a precipice, close against the junction of the

old coach-road and the new, and had only been saved from certain death by lighting upon a deep snowdrift that had accumulated at the foot of the rock beneath. In this snowdrift I was discovered at daybreak by a couple of shepherds, who carried me to the nearest shelter, and brought a surgeon to my aid. The surgeon found me in a state of raving delirium, with a broken arm and a compound fracture of the skull. The letters in my pocket-book showed my name and address; my wife was summoned to nurse me; and, thanks to youth and a fine constitution, I came out of danger at last. The place of my fall, I need scarcely say, was precisely that at which a frightful accident had happened to the north mail nine years before.

I never told my wife the fearful events which I have just related to you. I told the surgeon who attended me; but he treated the whole adventure as a mere dream born of the fever in my brain. We discussed the question

over and over again, until we found that we could discuss it with temper no longer, and then we dropped it. Others may form what conclusions they please—I *know* that twenty years ago I was the fourth inside passenger in that Phantom Coach.

CHAPTER V.

WE had at last come to the end of the Bundle of Waste Paper.

Like the learned translator of the Thousand and One Nights, I have given the stories in their succession, without recording by whom they were read, or where interrupted. It is enough that they amused our little party for the best part of two days, and that we had just finished the series when Sir Geoffrey Buchanan came to announce that the yacht was once more in sailing order.

We had been sitting in the scanty shade of

our little clump of trees, and Miss Carew had been the last reader. She laid the page aside, and looked regretfully around.

"Like the prisoner of Chillon," said she, "I am almost disposed to regain my freedom with a sigh. It is a strange, desolate little place; but I have taken a fancy for it."

"If you have taken a fancy for it, Miss Carew," said our friend the rector, "why don't you buy it? You are one of fortune's spoiled darlings, and are born to have whatever you cry for—moon and stars included."

Miss Carew smiled, as if the idea were not quite new to her.

"I do not suppose it is for sale," she replied.

"Nor I; but you may depend that the owner, whosoever he may be, would be only too glad to get rid of it."

"Do you think so? It is not a bad idea. What do you say, Sir Geoffrey? Would it

not be nice to own a real island, and fit it up *à la* Robinson Crusoe, with goats and a hermitage, and a man Friday?"

"I think it would be delightful," laughed Sir Geoffrey; "especially for the man Friday."

"By Jove!" ejaculated Brewer, "I shall apply for the situation."

"Pray do not give yourself that trouble," said Miss Carew. "Your character would not suit."

"I hope I shall be excused for remarking, in the words of the poet, that 'my bark is on the sea,'" said Sir Geoffrey.

"May we not make the tour of the island once more, before we go?" suggested Miss Carew.

Sir Geoffrey glanced at his watch.

"It is already seven o'clock," said he, "and there is scarcely a breath of air. We shall be four hours on the water."

"But there is a magnificent moon, and I delight in the sea by moonlight."

"Of course you must go round, if you particularly wish it," replied Buchanan, giving her his arm. "Are we not created to obey you?"

So they led the way, and we followed.

I have said that the island terminated towards the north in a rocky promontory overhanging the sea. It was to this point that Miss Carew and Sir Geoffrey now hastened. The rest presently turned back, leaving the two pioneers to reach the summit alone; whilst I, strolling leisurely on, arrived there a few moments later.

"It reminds me of the wonderful island we were reading about yesterday," said Miss Carew, looking round with a bright smile. "There is the ship, and yonder the mysterious city of the golden domes."

"The golden domes," said I, laughing, "look a little the worse for wear."

"True, and one misses the idol with the ruby eyes."

"What the deuce are you two talking about?" put in Sir Geoffrey.

"Of a marvellous story called 'The Discovery of the Treasure Isles,'" replied Miss Carew. "I will tell you all about it when we are on board, if you are not too busy to listen to me."

"'The Discovery of the Treasure Isles?'" repeated Buchanan. "Oh, I know that story by heart. My boy has it, and—why, surely, Phil, *you* wrote it?"

If my mother earth would but have gaped and swallowed me at that moment, I would have thankfully consented to be buried alive.

"I!" I stammered. "Certainly not—nothing of the kind."

"Nonsense—I'm positive of it. It came out in a magazine, and you sent it to Willy yourself. I remember all the circumstances perfectly."

"Perhaps you remember the Deluge?" I said, impatiently. "Or the siege of Troy?"

"Or perhaps you are misled, Sir Geoffrey, by some coincidence of names," suggested Miss Carew. "Now, as it happens, *I* know who the author of this story really is."

"Do you? Do you, indeed?" said my friend, looking thoroughly puzzled. "Well, in that case, of course I . . . . but it's really very odd. I could have sworn to the idol with the ruby eyes."

"And, stranger still, I know the author of every one of those stories that we have been reading these last two days," added Miss Carew.

"What! in the bundle of Waste Paper?"

"Yes."

Sir Geoffrey laughed, and shrugged his broad shoulders.

"Poor devil!" he ejaculated. "I suppose you won't tell him where you saw them last?"

"Of course not."

"It wouldn't be a very delicate compliment, would it? Fancy the feelings of an author who sees himself at the grocer's! There's an illustration of 'Alexander dead and turned to clay,' for you. How would *you* like it, Phil, my boy?"

Dearly as I loved Geoffrey Buchanan, I could have hanged, drawn, and quartered him at that moment with perfect satisfaction.

"I must take my chance of the grocer as well as others," I replied with the best air of indifference that I could muster. "I dare say I have furnished the letter-press to a pound of butter before now."

Miss Carew mercifully turned the conversation.

"Pray do not linger here any longer on my account," she said. "I have surveyed my future kingdom 'from the centre all round to the sea,' and, I fear, have kept our friends unreasonably long already."

"And do you really think you will buy the place?" said Buchanan. "Or is it only a joke?"

"I really think I will buy it, if the owner will sell it to me."

"What a droll notion!"

"That is just why I entertain it."

"But what will you do with the island, when you have got it?"

"People it with poll-parrots and monkeys, and make my subjects tattoo themselves."

"Then I hope you will pass a law compelling them to become cannibals as well," laughed Sir Geoffrey.

"I will do more than that," replied Miss Carew; "I will cause my good friend Sir Geoffrey Buchanan to be given over to my faithful islanders for their first grand banquet in honour of the new *régime*."

Sir Geoffrey shook his head.

"No, no," said he. "I am a family man, and cannot be spared. "You must sacrifice

some unencumbered youngster like Phil Dundonald, who is of no value to himself or anybody else."

"I am sure," said I, "that Miss Carew will not make so unwise an exchange. Authors are not half such good eating as baronets."

And thus, talking sheer nonsense by the way, we went down to the landing place, where the whole population of the island was drawn up to witness our departure. We found the rest of our party already on board, and Sir Geoffrey's mate impatient to take advantage of a light breeze that had just sprung up in our favour; but Miss Carew would not be hurried. She had a few kind words and a ready purse for all; and after we had put off from shore and begun to stand out to sea, I saw plainly enough that it was to her the little children stretched out their tiny arms, and to her their mothers dropped their farewell curtsies.

I was horribly uncomfortable. I had tried to seem gay and unconcerned as we came down to the shore; but I was on thorns the whole time. What *could* Miss Carew have meant by saying that she knew the author of the bundle of Waste Paper? It was impossible that she should have intended any allusion to myself; and yet, if she did not mean myself, whom could she mean? If she meant me, then she knew who sent her those hapless three volumes bound in white morocco. If she meant me, then she had read my rash dedication, and knew that I loved her. If she meant me, then she knew that she herself was "Miss * * * * *," and that my book had been sold off for—waste paper!

But supposing that she did not mean me, after all?

Ay, there was the rub; for in that case, I could only conclude that some base imposter had taken advantage of my incognito, my

dedication, and my white morocco ; and that was almost more unbearable still !

Revolving these perplexing possibilities in the silence of my thoughts, I strolled gloomily to and fro the little fore-deck, and kept aloof from the ladies. I was more than ever in love ; and, if that could be, more than ever in despair. Romantic and visionary as I was in many ways, I in nowise deluded myself about Miss Carew. I understood my position perfectly. I knew that I was less to her than "a primrose by a river's brim"—in fact that a primrose under those conditions would really possess a degree of interest for her that I could never hope to achieve under any circumstances whatever. I was well aware, too, that I had not shown to advantage at Seaborough Court. I had been shy, nervous, and silent; and though my gloves and boots were triumphs of tightness, I knew quite well that Miss Carew's obdurate heart was unapproachable on the side of either French kid, or

patent leather. In short, my love was hopeless. I had never supposed it could be otherwise; but custom made that unwelcome piece of knowledge none the less bitter.

It was now getting dusk. The little isle had long since dwindled to a mere speck; a languid air was abroad; and the moon was rising.

"How delicious this is!" said Mr. Stone, joining me where I stood leaning moodily over the side of the vessel. "How smoothly we glide along! A gondola could scarcely cleave the waters with a less perceptible motion than this dear little yacht. Have you been in Venice?"

"Oh, yes!" I replied, sulkily. "Of course."

"I think it's the most enchanting place in the world," said the rector.

"Except Naples."

"Not excepting the garden of Eden. Give me one thousand pounds a year, an old

Venetian palazzo, a good library, and a gondola, and I would not change lots with the Emperor of all the Russias."

To this observation I made no reply. I was thoroughly out of humour, and did not wish to talk if I could help it.

"What a delightful creature that is yonder!" said the rector, after a brief pause.

"Do you mean Mrs. Macpherson?"

"Do I mean Hecate? Whom should I mean but Miss Carew?"

"Humph!"

"She has been talking to me about that island. She really means to buy it, if it can be bought."

"I know she does. What of it?"

"Well, a good deal. She will do much for the welfare of those poor families. It is their uncared-for, isolated condition that has put the idea of purchasing the place into her head."

"Indeed!"

"Ay—that, and nothing else. You didn't suppose it was a mere whim, did you?"

"She spoke of it as a whim."

"That's her way. All her good deeds, according to her own statements, are caprices; but then her good deeds are so many, that she must be the most capricious woman on earth. You would not have believed her, if you had known her better."

"You speak as if you knew her very well yourself," said I, irritably.

The rector of Broadmere looked at me with some surprise.

"I have the honour of being tolerably well acquainted with Miss Carew," he said, with rather more gravity of manner. "She has permitted me to be her almoner from time to time, and my youngest child is her god-daughter."

"And what about the island?"

"She talks of rebuilding the cottages, improving the little harbour, and erecting a tiny

chapel and school-house. Those poor little infants, you know, are growing up without any kind of teaching; and as for religious instruction, why, not one of them has ever been inside a church-door in its life!"

"That's true," I replied. "And I doubt if the parents are much better off. One of the women said that she had not been over to the main-land for eleven years. But supposing both chapel and school-house built, where will you find a curate who would undertake such a miserable office?"

"Miss Carew can hardly hope to induce any clerk in holy orders to settle there, of course," said the rector, with a smile. "I wouldn't do it myself, for a bishopric; but I can easily find her some upright, well-taught, earnest teacher, who will instruct the children, read and pray with the parents, and act as her steward in general matters."

"In this case, of what use will the chapel be?"

"I expected you to ask that question," he replied. "Miss Carew is of opinion that some arrangement may be made with one of the neighbouring clergy to go over about once in every month or six weeks, and give them a church-service and sermon. I think there will be no difficulty in the matter, myself."

"How good she is!" I exclaimed, warmly.

"She is an angel, and I wish there were more like her. The worst of it is, that such women make us feel like mere Calibans."

"I don't believe there's a man on earth who is worthy of her!" said I.

"I will not go so far as to agree with you in that proposition; but I have certainly never had the pleasure of knowing him, if there be."

And with this consolatory remark, the rector strolled away, and left me again to my meditations.

By this time the moon had risen, and the

sea was one sheet of undulating silver. There was not another sail in sight; and the yacht glided along—as Mr. Stone had justly observed—like a gondola. Overhead clustered the innumerable stars; and not a sound was audible, save the merry chattering of the party on the after-deck, and the low "swish" of the waters as they parted before our prow. Now and then, for a moment only, a few faint sparkles of phosphorescent light gleamed and vanished in our track; but they came and went as suddenly as though a handful of jewels had been flung into the sea. Suddenly the talkers were all silent, and Miss Carew began to sing. I listened as if spell-bound, while her pure, delicious voice rose, and fell, and died away upon the breathless air. Except that it was a simple, pathetic, north-country ballad, sung to a wild Indian chant, I remember nothing of the song; but I know that her voice seemed to fill the night with its sweetness, and that I drank in its melody as eagerly as

one to whom "music is the food of love," and whose appetite for that sweet food can neither "sicken" nor "die."

A deep hush followed the last long, tremulous note; and then, after a little pause, she sang again.

Meanwhile, I stood apart in the moonlight, passionately listening.

CHAPTER VI.

"ONE word with you, Buchanan," said I, "before you go out."

We were passing through the hall, and he had his hat in his hand; but he turned back at this, and followed me into the library.

"Well, Phil," said he, "what is it?"

"I am afraid I must make holiday no longer," I replied.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I must go home to my work, like a good boy."

"Nonsense! we'll talk of that a month hence."

"Indeed we won't. We must talk of it this morning."

"Why this morning? When do you want to go?"

"I think I must go this afternoon."

"This afternoon?" repeated Sir Geoffrey, quickly. "What has happened?"

"Nothing has happened," I replied; "but I have been here close upon three weeks, and I have made up my mind to remain idle no longer. The pleasantest things must come to an end, sooner or later."

"Why the deuce, then, should you trouble yourself to make it 'sooner,' when it might be 'later?' I know something's the matter."

"Indeed, nothing is the matter; but this sort of life is unsettling, and the longer I stay, the harder I shall find it to go."

"I never heard so absurd an argument —never, by Jove! You might as reasonably say that it's of no use for a man to be happy while he lives, because he must die in the end."

"My dear Geoffrey, you don't know what the habit of work is."

"I know that you shall not leave Seaborough Court this afternoon. Why, man, we've a dinner-party to-day!"

"Dinner-parties are perilous vanities. A pen-and-ink diet agrees with me better."

Sir Geoffrey shook his head.

"It's of no use," said he. "I *feel* that you are withholding something from me. If Brewer has offended you . . . ."

"Not in the least," I interrupted, eagerly. "I do not like Captain Brewer, and I never did like him; but he has done nothing to annoy me in any way."

"I'm sure I've tried to make the place pleasant to you," said Sir Geoffrey.

"You have made it delightful. I only came, you know, for a week or ten days, and I have already stayed nearly three weeks. That doesn't look as if I found Seaborough Court very dreary—does it?"

"And yet you want to leave us!"

"And yet I feel that I ought to leave you—that I must leave you. And when it comes to 'ought' and 'must,' the sooner a thing is done the better."

"Perhaps so; and yet . . . Well, you assure me, at all events, that it is business, and only business, that calls you away?"

"Good heavens, Buchanan!" I exclaimed, impatiently, "are you counsel for the plaintiff, and am I the prisoner at the bar? I tell you it is better for me to go—is not that enough?"

"Better for you!" he repeated.

"Yes. The air of Durham disagrees with me. Do you understand that?"

"I don't believe it!" shouted he, bringing down his tremendous fist upon the table with a thump that almost shook the books on the bookshelves. "It's the best air in England! It's the best air . . . ."

"It's the best air in all the world for me,

my good fellow," said I, going over to the window, "when it's not breathed at the same time by Miss Carew."

"By Jove!" ejaculated Sir Geoffrey, drawing a deep breath.

"Ay," I replied, bitterly. "Now you have it. I hope you are content."

"Upon my soul, Phil," said he, "I'm more grieved than I know how to tell you. I had no idea of this—not the faintest idea in the world."

"I did not intend that you should have any idea of it."

"No, no—of course not. Only I couldn't think why you should want to run away."

"Well, you know now," said I, still at the window, with my back towards him.

"I almost wish I did not. I shall always reproach myself for bringing you so much together. I might have guessed what was likely to happen—but then I'm such a confounded idiot!"

"Do not reproach yourself," said I. "It is no fault of yours. I've loved her ever since last December."

"The deuce you have! Why, that makes it all the worse. Ah, Phil! you'll hate ever to come again to Seaborough Court!"

"It won't make a bit of difference, my dear fellow," said I forcing a smile. "I'll come down to you again in the autumn, and help you to shoot off the ptarmigan."

"Will you, though? Mind, then, I book you for that promise. In the meanwhile, we'll have some luncheon in here, all to ourselves; and I'll drive you over to the station afterwards. You'd rather not see her again, of course."

"I should not think of going away without seeing her," I replied. "I shall take my leave of her precisely as I shall take my leave of your other guests."

"That's right, my boy. Perhaps you'd rather go in to luncheon, as usual?"

"I should prefer to do so, certainly."

Sir Geoffrey came over to the window, and laid his hand affectionately upon my shoulder.

"I like your spirit, Phil," said he. "I don't believe *I* should have held my own so gallantly, had I been in your place—upon my soul I don't!"

His praises puzzled me. I felt as if I were beating a somewhat ignominious retreat, and was wholly unconscious of any heroic impulse.

"The only wonder to me," continued Sir Geoffrey, "is how she could be so blind and perverse as to refuse you!"

"Refuse me!" I cried. "Miss Carew has not refused me!"

"*Not* refused you? Do you mean that she has accepted you?"

"No, sir. Certainly not."

"Confound it man! She must have done one thing or the other!"

"Then I beg to assure you that she has

done neither the one thing nor the other—and for the best reason in the world. I have not asked her."

Sir Geoffrey looked at me for a moment very gravely; and then burst into such an inextinguishable roar of laughter as constrained him to go stamping up and down the room for several minutes. Thoroughly exhausted at last, he dropped into a chair, and wiped his face with his handkerchief.

"Never asked her!" he exclaimed in breathless gasps. "By Jove!—there's a suitor for you! Never asked her!—and I, throwing away my sympathy for nothing!"

"Laugh as much as you please," I said, now really angry; "but how could I—a poor devil, living literally by such few wits as heaven has given me—presume to offer marriage to Miss Carew!"

"Fiddlesticks!" replied Sir Geoffrey, "Miss Carew is not a vestal virgin."

"But she is a great heiress; and I have

not a penny in the world that I don't earn by my pen."

"In short, you think that, being so rich already, Miss Carew cannot possibly marry unless to become still richer! That's a rotten theory!"

"I know it; but it is the creed of the world."

"Then you may take my word for it that Miss Carew is too good and too wise a young woman, to pin her faith upon the creed of the world. Nonsense, man—if you really love her, tell her so, and have done with it!"

"I would go to her this moment," said I, "if she were as poor as myself."

"But as she happens, instead, to enjoy about fifteen thousand a year in landed property, you think it more dignified and romantic to go back to London without having fired a single shot! By all the Gods, Phil, it's just the most ridiculous thing I have ever known in my life!"

"I can't help it, if it is."

"For *can't* read *won't*—and for *won't*, read pride, vainglory and hypocrisy!"

"It is of no use, Sir Geoffrey. You may laugh at me, or you may blow me up; but you will not shake my resolution."

Sir Geoffrey shrugged his shoulders. I could see that he thought me beyond the pale of common sense.

"At least, then," he said, "you will stay for another week?"

"I will stay for your dinner-party this evening," I replied; "but I have made up my mind to go back to town to-morrow."

And then Sir Geoffrey saw that I was in earnest, and said no more.

I was in earnest. I had good reason to be in earnest. I loved her; and the longer I stayed, the worse it would be for me.

CHAPTER VII.

THERE were two postal deliveries every day at Seaborough Court; one early in the morning, and the other at six o'clock in the afternoon. By the morning's delivery, we received our letters at the breakfast table; by the afternoon, just about the time when the first dressing-bell was rung. We dined at seven; and as I seldom came in till half-past six, I generally found my budget awaiting me in my bedroom. On that particular day—that day which was to be my last at Seaborough Court—I had remained out so late and had ridden so far, that it wanted but a quarter to seven when I dismounted at the entrance to Sir Geoffrey's stables, flung the

reins to a groom, and ran upstairs to dress for dinner.

I found my table, as usual, strewn with letters and papers. I had no time to examine them very closely: but I glanced at the envelopes, and, seeing only one handwriting with which I was not acquainted, separated that letter from the rest, to be read when the more important business of dressing was completed.

It did not take very long. I was less particular about my appearance now. As the hopelessness of my love forced itself more and more upon me, I lost faith in my tailor, and my passion for pomade sensibly diminished. To speak seriously, I was unsettled and unhappy—feverishly anxious to get away from the scene of my trouble, and yet unwilling to go. So I dressed quickly, and opened my letter.

It bore an unaccustomed postage stamp, and was dated from Calcutta.

"Sir," it ran, "I am instructed by the proprietors of the *Calcutta Thunderer* to offer you the appointment of editor, now vacant by the retirement of George Tunstall, Esq. The editorial salary amounts to twelve thousand rupees per annum; and a suite of apartments will be assigned to you in the establishment. Should this proposition meet your views, you will be required to enter upon the duties by the first of October next at latest, and we shall hope to see you in Calcutta in the course of September. A reply by next mail will oblige.

"I am, sir, your obedient Servant,

"J. Johnson, *Sec.*"

Editor of the *Calcutta Thunderer*, with a salary of twelve thousand rupees a year, and a suite of rooms in the establishment! I could hardly believe it. Twelve thousand rupees per annum! I seized a pen and made a rough calculation of the amount. Taking the

rupee at two shillings, instead of two shillings and fourpence, it came to no less a sum than six hundred a year English! The prospect of such wealth bewildered me. I could hardly realise it. I read the letter again, to make certain that it was all true; and, having made certain, sat down to consider what I ought to do.

Of course I must accept the appointment—I should be mad to refuse it. It was the greatest literary windfall that had ever tumbled into my lap; and it could not come at a better time. Here were change of scene, change of occupation, and a fine position, all to be had by a few strokes of my pen. Nothing, I said to myself, could have happened more opportunely. Must I, wasting in despair, die because a woman's fair? Certainly not. I would be editor of the *Calcutta Thunderer*. I would put all Europe between myself and Miss Carew. I would forget the past, begin a new life from this moment, and accept

the twelve thousand rupees per annum.

Just as I came to this resolution, the first dinner-bell rang, and thrusting the letter into my pocket, I went down to the drawing-room.

I am not going to describe Lady Buchanan's dinner-party. It was superb and stupid, as country dinner-parties inevitably are, where half the guests are neighbouring rectors, and the other half hunting squires; where all the people come in weary and hungry from a twelve miles' drive; where the ladies eat nothing, and the gentlemen drink a good deal; and the conversation is divided between millinery and patent manure. I found an opportunity, however, of whispering my great news in Sir Geoffrey's ear, just before we went down to the dining-room; and when we rejoined the ladies after coffee, I found, somewhat to my surprise, that Lady Buchanan, Mrs. Macpherson, and Miss Carew, knew all about it.

"I suppose we must congratulate you, Mr. Dundonald," said my friend's wife, making room for me on the sofa beside herself; "but you must condole with us. We are inconsolable at the prospect of losing you."

"You will forget your English friends," said Mrs. Macpherson, reproachfully.

"Not so soon, I fear, as my English friends will forget me," I replied. "Exiles have longer memories than they who stay at home among those they love."

"Then why do the exiles go away?" asked Miss Carew, with an indifferent smile. "Why do they not also stay at home with those they love?"

"The exiles, madam," I replied, "cannot always choose. It happens sometimes that they are poor; and foreign gold is better than none. And it sometimes happens that those whom they love do not love them."

"In which case, I presume, the foreign gold consoles them," laughed Miss Carew.

"The pagoda-tree covers a multitude of sorrows, does it not?"

"I shall be better able to reply to that question twenty-five years hence," said I; "if I survive the rice and curry treatment so long."

"Five-and-twenty years hence!" repeated Lady Buchanan. "You surely do not mean to remain a quarter of a century in Calcutta?"

"I think it probable that, when I once settle in India, I shall be in no haste to return," I replied. "I am convinced that a man who desires to do well in life, must make up his mind to be stationary. A wanderer makes neither friends nor fortune; and I should not wish to live without either."

"By the end of twenty-five years, I shall be old and grey, and a grandmother!" said Lady Buchanan.

"And I shall be old and yellow, and perhaps a grandfather," I replied.

"You must not marry in India, Mr. Dundonald!" cried Mrs. Macpherson, with a little scream expressive of horror.

"Why not, my dear madam?"

"Because the girls who go out are just those who have failed to find husbands at home. A man who marries in India is as badly off as a lady who goes into a country shop, and buys the fashions of last year!"

"I am much obliged to you for the caution," I replied, with mock gravity. "Perhaps, when I want a wife, you will kindly take the trouble to select and send one out to me. I shall be sure to like whatever pattern pleases you best, provided only the article be of the newest style, not faded, and warranted to wear."

"I shall be delighted to undertake your commission, Mr. Dundonald," said the widow, laughing; "and will do my best to give you satisfaction, you may depend."

With some jesting reply, I then rose, and walked away.

I had carried it off lightly and smilingly, but my heart overflowed with bitterness. She had scarcely spoken a dozen words, and even those were words of almost studied indifference. Had a stable-boy, or a mere hound of Geoffrey Buchanan's been in question, she would have expressed some faint interest in his fortunes. Common civility might be supposed to exact so much as that. And yet common civility had not prompted her to offer a syllable of congratulation or well-wishing, to a gentleman who had shown her every kind of social attention, who had certainly done nothing to merit her displeasure, and who had for nearly three weeks lived under the same roof, and eaten at the same table as herself.

"How does she take the news, Phil?" asked my friend, coming up to me, eagerly. "Does she seem sorry that you're going away."

"Sorry!" I echoed. "She cares as much about it as Gibson's Venus—or the Britannia

on a five-pound note—or the lady in the lobster! To tell you the truth, Buchanan, I think she dislikes me; so the sooner I am gone the better!"

"It's impossible she should dislike you, my dear fellow!" exclaimed Sir Geoffrey. "How can she?"

I shrugged my shoulders, and tried to look as if I did not particularly care about it.

"What can she want better than a well-born, good-looking, clever young fellow like yourself, Phil?" pursued my friend, warmly. "Why she does not fly to you with open arms is surprising to me; but as to disliking you . . . I can't understand it—upon my soul, I can't. But there, who can understand a woman?"

"Who, indeed?—always excepting Œdipus and Monsieur de Balzac. Don't you want a fourth hand for a rubber?"

"Why, yes—but won't you prefer to stay with the ladies?"

"No, thank you. I prefer the whist-room to the drawing-room to-night."

And so I sat down with a deaf rector and a couple of county squires, and played long whist all the evening, in order that I might see no more of Miss Carew.

CHAPTER VIII.

I ROSE early on the morning of the day fixed for my departure, having passed an almost sleepless night, and being anxious to get away as quickly and quietly as possible. I was now more eager to leave Seaborough Court than I had been, three weeks before, to accept Sir Geoffrey's invitation. Nay, I would have given much to blot those three weeks from my life; for since that time my foolish love had become an earnest passion, which threatened to cast a shadow upon all my future. I wished now that I had never come. I wished that I had never loved her. I wished that I had never seen her. I wished

that I had never heard her name. There was no extravagance now about my passion. I neither soliloquised aloud, nor wrote her name on the windows with my diamond ring; nor made rhymes about her while I was shaving, of a morning; nor indulged in dreams of fires and storms, and deeds of brilliant valour. My love was past the effervescing stage, and had struck its roots deep down into my very life.

"So much the worse for me!" thought I, as I leaned out of my bed-room window that dewy, sunny, early morning in July, and watched the lazy swell of the tide on the beach below. "Heigho! so much the worse for me!"

And then I asked myself if this were really so—if, indeed, I were not a gainer, even in my disappointment and my sorrow? Saddened I was, and saddened probably for ever; but was I not, at the same time, sobered, exalted, purified? Should I not henceforth

accept life in a more earnest spirit? Must I not, by reason of this very service of love which had cost me so dear, learn to do my share of world's work more worthily and completely than I had hitherto attempted to do it?

I questioned my heart earnestly and fervently; and the answer came without pause or prompting. I felt that I was both stronger and wiser; that I had now, for the first time, put on the *toga virilis*; and that I would, so far as I had power to will my own future, live a true life among my fellow-men.

With this feeling strong upon me, I seized pen and paper; wrote my acceptance of the Indian appointment; and expressed my intention of going by the Overland Route early in August, so as to reach Calcutta a clear fortnight before my duties should actually commence. This done, I packed my clothes and papers ready for travelling; and finding that it still wanted nearly two hours

to breakfast-time, put my letter in my pocket, stole softly down the stairs, let myself out by a side-door, and took the road leading to the nearest post-town.

It was a long four miles to Yoxby, and the way lay mostly over a bleak moorland, rising in a succession of natural terraces, divided off here and there by low stone fences, and intersected by some of the worst roads I ever trod in my life. Large flocks of sheep scattered over the wastes, and, now and then, a lonely farmhouse relieved the wide monotony; but it was a dreary walk, and I was not sorry when, having reached the village, and dropped my letter into the post-box, I turned back, and began descending once more towards the sea.

The way home seemed half as short again as the way out. The doubt, the uncertainty, the suspense of judgment, were all over now; and the very fact that it was too late to look back, brought a sense of relief with it. I re-

peated to myself, over and over again, as I strode along in the bright sunshine of the early morning, that I must henceforth think only of the duties which I had accepted—that in less than a month I should be on my way out—that before ten weeks had passed over my head I should be actually dwelling in the scene of my future labours—that, above and before all else, I must learn now to forget my hopeless, aimless, senseless love for Miss Carew !

It was half-past eight o'clock as I entered the lodge gates of Seaborough Court. The postman had ridden past me a few minutes before, and they had begun breakfast by the time I got in. Sir Geoffrey had just unlocked the post-bag and distributed its contents among his guests ; those who had received letters were busy reading them ; and my own were lying piled beside my plate.

" You're late this morning, Phil," said Sir Geoffrey, when I had exchanged the usual

round of greetings, and dropped into my place.

"On the contrary, I am earlier than usual," I replied. "I have been over to Yoxby."

"On foot?"

"On foot—and I think I never remember to have taken so ugly a morning's walk."

"I should suppose not, indeed, Mr. Dundonald," said Lady Buchanan. "There is scarcely a tree between Seaborough and Yoxby, by the road. You should have kept to the coast, if you wanted beauty."

"I am afraid I was thinking more of business than beauty this morning," I replied; "and more of the post-box than of either."

"Of the post-box?" she repeated.

"Yes—I rose very early, and wrote an important letter, which I had a fancy to post with my own hands."

"Not the letter to Calcutta, Phil?" said Sir Geoffrey, looking up from his newspaper.

"Yes—the letter to Calcutta."

"Humph! Come to any decision?"

"Of course. I have accepted the appointment."

Sir Geoffrey looked grave, but said nothing. Lady Buchanan and Mrs. Macpherson broke into friendly lamentations. Miss Carew went on reading her letters, and appeared not even to hear what we were saying.

"I cannot congratulate you with any sincerity, Mr. Dundonald," said my friend's wife, "because I am so sorry you are going. We did not really believe that you would leave England, and all your friends."

"I can hardly believe it now," added Mrs. Macpherson.

"I think you should have allowed yourself a little more time for reflection," observed Sir Geoffrey.

"Horrid place, India!" ejaculated Captain Brewer. "You'd be in no hurry to go there, if you knew what it was like, I can tell you! Bad enough for soldiers; but worse for

civilians. Vile climate—like living in an oven one half of the year, and in a shower-bath the other!"

"Of course you are acquainted with Hindustanee," said the rector.

"Not with a single word," I replied.

"Oh, by George! you'll never get along without it!" exclaimed the dragoon.

"I really cannot see why. As editor of an English paper . . . ."

"May I ask what paper?" interposed the rector.

"The *Calcutta Thunderer*."

"An admirable publication—quite the best newspaper in Eastern India," said he, approvingly; "but I fear you will find the work tremendous."

"So much the better. I don't care how hard I work."

"Still I presume you do not wish to die in the shafts, like poor Guy Hamilton."

"Guy Hamilton?" I repeated, interrogatively.

"Have you not heard of him? He was one of your predecessors. I knew him quite well. He died literally from overwork, and anxiety of mind. A man cannot be editor, sub-editor, literary critic, proof-reader, general manager, and author of all the leaders, with impunity."

"I should think not; but I am engaged as editor only."

"Precisely. He was engaged as editor only; and he had his staff under him, as you will have your staff under you; but permit me to tell you, my dear sir, that a literary staff in India is a mere broken reed for an editor to rest upon. The men are always ill, and gone up to the hills—or lazy, and decline to work. Poor Guy had often no brains but his own to depend upon, and the *Thunderer* proved his death at last. He was succeeded, I believe, by a Mr. Tunstall."

"Who is now about to retire," I replied.

"On a liver complaint, of course," added Captain Brewer.

"I think you are all very unkind to say these dismal things to Mr. Dundonald," said Lady Buchanan. "He has accepted the appointment, and posted his letter; and your evil auguries can now only serve to make him miserable."

I laughed, and shook my head.

"I flatter myself that I have, perhaps, a better constitution than my predecessors," I replied; "and, at all events, I am not in the least alarmed about my future. If the letter were neither written nor posted, I should both write and post it to-day, all the same."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Sir Geoffrey, dashing down his paper with a vehemence that almost made us jump. "Here's a piece of news! Lady Osnaburgh is married to Fred Falconer—Falconer, the landscape painter."

"Not the widow of Viscount Osnaburgh?" said the rector.

"No other. What a wonderful match for Fred! A young fellow whom I've known ever since he was a boy. Why, it seems only yesterday that he came back from Rome!"

"Viscountess Osnaburgh is one of the richest widows in England, is she not?" asked Lady Buchanan.

"She's so rich, my dear," replied Sir Geoffrey, "that, like the princess in the fairy tale, she never speaks but the pearls drop out of her mouth."

"I never saw such diamonds as hers," said Mrs. Macpherson; "except Princess Torlonia's."

"The old viscount left her everything, you know," said the rector; "the Surrey and Sussex estates, Holkham Park, Osnaburgh Castle, the enormous Scotch property, the house in Piccadilly, the place at Cannes, the

villas in Florence and Naples, and all that wonderful gallery of old masters that every one believed would go to the nation at his death! She was one of the greatest matches in Europe."

"And is one of the finest women in Europe, too," exclaimed the dragoon.

"Well, Falconer deserves his luck," said Sir Geoffrey. "A more upright, manly, honourable young fellow never handled a brush."

"I wonder how she came to know him," said Lady Buchanan.

"And I wonder how he dared to ask her!" I added.

"She asked him, you may depend on it," said Mrs. Macpherson.

"My dearest Julia!" cried Lady Buchanan, "how can you think anything so dreadful?"

"I don't see that it's dreadful at all," replied the widow, coolly; "and I'm sure it's

extremely probable. Lady Osnaburgh is older than Mr. Falconer; of higher rank; and inconceivably rich. I can quite suppose that he would not presume to speak first. But you surely would not have two people made wretched for a point of ceremony?"

"Certainly not!" exclaimed Sir Geoffrey. "The common rules of etiquette don't apply to such exceptional cases as this."

"Wish she'd asked me—confound it!" muttered Captain Brewer.

"I once knew of a case in point," said Miss Carew, folding up her letter, and joining in the conversation for the first time.

"Where the lady popped the question to the gentleman?" laughed the rector.

"Not exactly that; but where the lady was obliged to let the gentleman understand that she would accept him, if he asked her."

"By Jove, though!" ejaculated Sir Geoffrey. "I should like to hear how she did it."

"I'm sure it was very unbecoming, how-

ever she did it!" said Lady Buchanan, with a little childish toss of her pretty head.

Miss Carew smiled somewhat gravely, and, after a moment's hesitation, said:—

"I will tell you, if you wish it; omitting names of course; and as the lady was an intimate friend of my own, I hope her conduct will not seem so very shocking, after all."

They all expressed their eagerness to hear, and Miss Carew, leaning her cheek, thoughtfully, upon her hand, thus began:—

"The inequality of position between my hero and heroine was, I should tell you, much less obvious than that between your Viscountess and her landscape painter. My heroine was neither very beautiful, nor very clever; but she was tolerably wealthy. My hero was very clever indeed, as well-born as herself; but poor. Neither had the lady the excuse of seniority. I fear she was quite as young as he, if not younger; so you see hers was a position of much greater difficulty than

that in which we have supposed Lady Osnaburgh to be placed. There was, in fact, no valid reason why the gentleman should not have paid his court in the orthodox fashion; but he was either very proud, or very modest, for though he loved my friend with his whole heart, he would have died sooner than open his lips to tell her so. I have always thought, myself, that he was an exceedingly foolish young man, and not worth the trouble she took to cure him of his dumbness."

"I quite agree with you, Miss Carew!" said Sir Geoffrey, with a significant glance in my direction. "The fellow who is afraid to ask a lady, does not deserve to win her."

I felt myself turn scarlet at this point-blank allusion; but, happily, my confusion passed unnoticed.

"But if he never told his love, how did the lady find it out?" asked the rector.

"At first through her woman's instinct, I suppose," replied Miss Carew; "but, later,

by means of an indirect kind of anonymous declaration which he contrived to make to her."

"An anonymous declaration!" exclaimed Sir Geoffrey. "I never heard of such a thing in my life."

"Miss Carew means that he sent the lady a Valentine," said the rector.

Miss Carew shook her head.

"No," she replied. "He sent her a book. I have told you that he was very clever; but I should also have told you that he was an author. He published an anonymous work, and dedicated it to her, also anonymously. That dedication was a declaration. I have a transcript of it in my purse, and will read it to you."

I had turned hot and cold, as she spoke these few last words; and now, as she took out the paper from her purse, a strange feeling, which I can only describe as a sort of rapturous terror, came upon me.

"It runs thus," said Miss Carew, and her voice trembled a little as she spoke: "*Madam, If I dared I would lay these volumes at your feet, and entreat your gracious permission to ennoble them with your name; but, wanting the courage to address you, I venture only to do with them what I have already done with my heart, myself, and the few talents heaven has bestowed on me—dedicate them to you in silent homage, and suffer them to float down the stream of time as safely, or perilously, as chance may ordain!*"

"Very pretty," said the rector. "Very well turned—very pretty indeed."

"So she thought."

"He signed his name to it, I hope?" asked Mrs. Macpherson.

"On the contrary, he took every imaginable pains to maintain his incognito."

"But she found the secret out at last?" said Lady Buchanan, now greatly interested.

"Yes, after many months."

"And she knew that he really loved her?"

"She knew it as well as any woman can know such a fact before she has been told it."

"My dear Miss Carew, she knew it as well as if she had been told it!" laughed Sir Geoffrey. "Women always find us out. Before we know our own minds, they sometimes know them for us! But I hope your heroine was as much in love as your hero, and accepted him at last?"

"How could she accept a man who would not ask her to do so?" cried Mrs. Macpherson. "Did he really never make any more direct avowal, Miss Carew?"

"Never."

"Then pray put us out of our suspense! Did she write to him?"

"No."

"Did she speak to him?"

"No."

"Did she fall ill, and send for him when she was dying?"

"No."

"Then, in heaven's name! what *did* she do?"

"I will show you. Can anyone lend me a pencil?"

Three or four pencils were immediately offered. Miss Carew took the nearest, and went on.

"Events took place," said she, "which threatened to separate them for ever. I am not at liberty to say what those events were; but, at all events, my hero and heroine were on the point of being parted for life, when they met one day at the house of a friend."

My heart throbbed painfully—I could scarcely breathe—I waited for her next words like a criminal for his sentence.

"It so happened," she continued, "that they were shown into the library, and that my hero's anonymous work was lying on the

table. She took it up, as I may now take up this slip of paper, carelessly turning a leaf now and then, in the pauses of the conversation. You may imagine how he watched her, wondering silently if she had ever read his book, and never dreaming that she had penetrated the secret of its authorship!"

"Poor fellow! and his heart almost breaking, I daresay, the whole time!" exclaimed Lady Buchanan.

"Presently, when no one else was observing her, she took a pencil from the table; turned to the dedication-leaf; wrote one little word, thus, at the foot of the page; and closed the book. He thought she had corrected some trifling error of the press; but conceive what he felt when, later in the evening, he contrived to get possession of the volume, and read—this."

And Miss Carew, who had suited the action to the word, and written something on the transcript, handed the paper to Lady Buchanan.

"Read it aloud, my dear! read it aloud!" cried Sir Geoffrey. "What did she write on it?"

"Nothing but 'accepted.' Neither a word more nor a word less," replied his wife.

Accepted!

I looked at Miss Carew. She was very pale—pale even to her lips—but smiling still, and looking towards Lady Buchanan.

"I hope you do not blame her very much," she said, softly.

"I do not blame her at all, my dear," replied Lady Buchanan. "She did *not* make the gentleman an offer—she simply accepted him. It is not a case in point."

"Not in the least," said the rector. "I had hoped to hear that the lady went down on her knees, after the manner of the best male models, and tendered her hand and heart in the style of Mrs. Radcliffe's heroes."

"I confess I had expected something more dramatic!" said Mrs. Macpherson.

"And I something more romantic," said Sir Geoffrey.

"But I did not promise you either a dramatic or a romantic story," replied Miss Carew; "so it is not my fault if you are disappointed."

"The lady's expedient was ingenious," said the rector.

"Yes; but there's a slightly commercial flavour about it that I don't altogether like," objected Sir Geoffrey. "It was more like accepting a bill than a lover."

They all laughed at this, and presently the breakfast-party broke up.

Half an hour later, I was standing beside her in the garden, telling her how I loved her. I know not what I said, or how I said it. I only know that the words came in an eager, burning, tumultuous torrent; and that she listened to them. At length I came to a pause, and implored her for an answer.

"What answer can I give?" said she, with a provoking smile. "Are you not going to India? And must I promise to wait twenty-five years for you?"

"I would not leave you for Paradise!" I exclaimed.

"Thank you," she replied, laughingly; "but it wouldn't be Paradise at all. It would be purgatory, if not the Inferno itself. I suppose I must accept you, if only to save you from the '*Calcutta Thunderer*'!"

"I hope I shall not go mad with joy!" said I "I think if I could only shout, or run a race, or fight somebody, it would do me good. For heaven's sake, give me something to do that will sober me!"

"With pleasure. You shall go forth, like a knight of old romance, to that undiscovered island where we had our memorable picnic, and fetch me the enchanted bundle of Waste Paper."

I covered my face with my hands, and groaned dismally.

"I may thank Buchanan for that humiliation!" I exclaimed. "But for his atrocious speech that evening, you would never have found me out."

"I beg your pardon," she replied. "I had found you out long before, and his words only confirmed my suspicions. I hope you mean to dedicate another book to me?"

"I mean to dedicate my life to you!"

"In how many volumes?"

"In as many as I may live to write."

"A sort of romantic Annual Register, in fact! But I will accept no more anonymous homage."

"My books shall be as the trees of Arden, carved all over with the name, not of Rosalind, but Helen! Nay, I will have no heroines henceforth that are not Helens!"

"Keep to that agreeable monotony, and you will have no readers either!"

"I should not care now, if I knew that every page I write henceforth—

'Should bind a book, should line a box,
Should serve to curl a maiden's locks.'

You are my public, and your approbation shall be my fame!"

"Nay," said she, smiling, "I should not be content to look upon my husband's brain as a mere waste-paper factory. You must write no more for the grocer, Philip Dundonald."

"I will write for you, my beloved," I replied. "Only that which is good enough for all the world, is worthy of Helen Carew."

THE END.

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